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S O M E

BRIEF REMARKS

U P O N

Sundry Important Subjects,

Necessary to be understood and attended to by all
professing the CHRISTIAN RELIGION,

Principally addressed to

The People called QUAKERS.

By J O H N G R I F F I T H. *K*

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SERIES

Subjects

to be understood and attended to by all
proceeding the Commission



The People of the Quakers

BY JOHN CHRISTIAN

LONDON:

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THE
P R E F A C E.

CANDID READER,

WERE it not apprehended by me
a duty, thus to offer to thy se-
rious perusal the following plain
and experimental observations upon various
subjects, thou hadst not heard from me in
this way.

I have often, with many brethren and sisters
in the truth, been deeply affected in viewing
the great danger Christian professors are ex-
posed to through a prevailing indifference of
mind. For when a lethargic stupefaction
hath gained the ascendancy, religion in no-
tion, and fruitless speculation, satisfy a mind
so depraved. A renovation of heart, with-
out which none can be truly religious, hath
not been sought after. Pleased with the shell
or form only, such have not been sensible
they wanted the substance.

The P R E F A C E.

When the subtil adversary finds men in this kind of sleep or stupefaction, it is then his opportunity for sowing the tares amongst the wheat: by such means the field of the Christian church became in process of time covered therewith. That which came nearest to my heart, and most earnestly engaged my attention towards the present undertaking (not without ardent desires for the lasting advantage of Christians of all denominations) was, that the descendants of a people, who a little above a century ago were very marvellously brought out of, and redeemed from, all lifeless shadows, and empty forms of religion, to enjoy and be grounded in the blessed power and life thereof, might be preserved truly sensible of the way and means whereby our worthy predecessors obtained a firm establishment in the truth, as it is Christ Jesus: for it is evident, where the means are neglected, the end cannot be attained.

That many of these descendants in this day of outward peace and plenty, inclining to false liberty and ease, do shun the cross of Christ, which would crucify them to the world, is a mournful truth, too obvious to be denied. In consideration hereof, I found a concern to throw a few observations before them, as near as I could, suited to the present state of things; endeavouring, in some degree,

The P R E F A C E.

gree, to offer to the view of the present and succeeding generations, by what means our worthy predecessors became such a living honourable body of people; that the necessity may fully appear of the same blessed power operating upon their minds, in order to qualify all, that they may rightly succeed those valiants in maintaining the cause of God.

The objection which cast some discouragement in my way, may also occur to some readers; *viz.* that the subjects treated of in this small tract have been divers times heretofore judiciously wrote upon by different authors. This is no more than may be said of most other religious subjects as well as these. Divine Wisdom and Goodness hath seen meet to revive the same truths, by different instruments, from generation to generation; the Lord's servants speaking the same thing, as with one mouth. Herein God's gracious condescension to human frailty is very conspicuous and wonderful, by causing those excellent truths, so essential to be received that man's soul may be saved, to be frequently revived and inculcated, seeing he is so liable to forget God, and his reasonable duty to him.

Having no desire to enlarge, I shall only add my earnest prayer to the God and Father of all sure mercies, that this mite of simple experimental truths, which I have cast into
the

The P R E F A C E.

the treasury, may meet the serious reader, of whatever denomination, with the divine blessing in it! If that graciously attend, though what is here offered may be justly accounted as the barley-loaves, the hungry soul may receive some strength and refreshment thereby.

30th. 8th Mo. 1764.

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SOME
BRIEF REMARKS

UPON

Sundry Important Subjects.

CHAPTER I.

Containing tender ADVICE, CAUTION and COUNSEL
to PARENTS and CHILDREN.

FIRST to parents. Very much depends upon a right education of children. I therefore find it in my mind to make a few observations thereon, as it shall please the Lord to open my understanding; without whose assistance, and blessing upon our labours, they prove altogether fruitless.

The children of Israel were strictly enjoined to make the training up their children in the law of God their constant care; viz. "Hear, O Israel, Deut. vi. 4,
"the Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt 5, 6, 7
"love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and
"with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And
"these words which I command thee this day,
"shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt teach
"them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk

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“ of them when thou sittest in thine house, and
 “ when thou walkest by the way, and when thou
 “ liest down, and when thou risest up.”

Exceeding great is the trust reposed in parents and heads of families. It certainly lies upon them an indispensable duty, as much as they can, both by precept and example, to form the tender minds of their offspring to virtue, as saith the apostle,

Eph. vi. 4.

“ And ye fathers, provoke not your children to
 “ wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and
 Prov. xxii. 6. “ admonition of the Lord.” And, “ Train up
 “ a child in the way he should go: and when he
 “ is old, he will not depart from it.”

Parents must first be well acquainted with the way of truth, and the nurture and admonition of the Lord themselves, before they can train up their children therein. That which is likely to have the greatest influence upon their tender minds, is a steady circumspect example, in a self-denying conduct before them; which will beget reverence, and honourable thoughts in children, and servants too, concerning those whom Providence hath placed over them.

Great care should dwell upon the minds of parents, to make it fully evident to their children that they are much more desirous they should possess an heavenly than an earthly inheritance; that they are more concerned their souls may be adorned with the graces of the Holy Spirit, than that their bodies should appear finely decked with outward ornaments.

Children

Children will be very likely to value that which they see is preferred by their parents, whether it be the things of the world, or religion. If this be really the case, which I think will be allowed by considerate persons, O then! how much depends upon them for the promotion of truth and righteousness on the earth, both in regard to the present time, and generations to come. This yet more fully appears by the Lord's testimony concerning *Abraham*. "And the Lord said, Shall

Gen xviii.
17, 18, 19.

"I hide from *Abraham* that thing which I do?" "seeing that *Abraham* shall surely become a great "and mighty nation, and all the nations of the "earth shall be blessed in him. For I know him, "that he will command his children, and his "household after him, and they shall keep the way "of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that "the Lord may bring upon *Abraham* that which "he hath spoken of him." In chap. xvii. ver. 18. his godly concern appears earnest, even for the child of the bond-woman; viz. "And *Abraham* "said unto God, Oh! that *Ishmael* might live before thee." Which petition was answered.

Constant and warm endeavours, with secret cries to God that his blessing may attend them, may prove effectual to the preservation of children. This should begin very early, even as soon as they are capable to distinguish what pleases, or what displeases their parents. A self-willed perverse disposition may soon be discovered in children (more especially in some) which is very earnest to have its own way, before they can judge what is best

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Advice, Caution, and Counsel

for themselves. This should constantly be subjected to those that are to judge for them. They should never be suffered to prevail by an untoward fretful temper, not even when what they crave is suitable for them to receive, were they in a submissive disposition; that they may clearly see (which they soon will) it is more to their benefit and comfort to yield an entire subjection to their providers, and that nothing is to be got by a fretful self-willed temper. This should be done by a constant steady hand, and it will make the work of parents abundantly easier in the government of their children, and may prove a great ease to those concerned with them, perhaps through the whole course of their lives; since by crushing their perverseness in the first buddings, it may so die away, as never more to gain the pre-eminence. This would be a wonderful blessing, and they would owe their watchful parents more for suppressing that, and other pernicious buds in them, than for a large patrimony or outward inheritance. Indeed every thing of an evil nature should be kept down in them by such careful steady means. Oh! what a fine hopeful generation of youths should we have, were parents in general to exercise this prudent care in all things! I verily believe, instead of sober virtuous youth being as speckled birds amongst others, the rebellious, disobedient, and froward would be so; and this would bring judgment over them.

A conscientious discharge of this great duty would bring an ample reward to such parents, as have no greater joy than to see their children walk-
ing

ing in the truth : and if they should prove unsuccessful, as it sometimes hath happened, they will be clear of their childrens blood in God's sight; which is a very great thing; so that though the rebellion and evil conduct of their offspring may be their sorrow, it will not be their sin.

I have sometimes been much grieved, when I have seen youth in the way of being ruined by the very imprudent indulgence of their parents, especially mothers; making themselves and others mere slaves to the perverse humours of their children; taking abundance of pains to extinguish the flame of their untoward tempers, by such means as add fewel to the fire; inverting the order of nature, by becoming subject to those who should submit to them, by answering their unreasonable *cravings*; making themselves more work (and that too of a very disagreeable nature) to educate one, than, were they to follow the method before hinted, it would require to educate a number, and in the end not so well done neither. Parents, who are so very imprudent, have less reason to reflect upon their children for being self-willed, and not subject to them when they grow up: seeing they themselves have cherished, fed, and supported that temper in them from their cradles; whereby, unless religion lays deep hold of them, and changes the state of their minds, they are unfitted to be a comfort either to themselves or others; not being formed for good servants, husbands, wives, or members of society.

Alas!

Alas ! when I take a view of the world, and reflect how it wallows in abundance of wickedness and corruption, which mankind possess in a kind of succession from parents to children, like outward inheritances ; I have no words sufficient to set forth to the full so deplorable a case. How sorrowful it is to observe even children, by the power of example, become as grown men in wickedness and hardness of heart ! Custom and general practice hath, as it were, changed the nature of some gross evils, so that there appears very little remorse in the almost constant practice of them. Many children are brought up, like their parents, much strangers to their duty both to God and man. This almost universal infection of evil, forgetfulness of God, and of many or most relative duties, by a constantly wallowing in the pollutions of this world, are very alarming, and call loudly for a reformation, lest the Lord break forth in judgment upon the nations, as the breach of waters. It is indeed a painful task for godly parents, amidst so general a depravity, to educate their children without receiving some tincture from this pollution, which runs down like a strong torrent. The safest way is, with great strictness to keep them out of such company ; though an inconvenience may attend that in some outward respects. But oh ! the souls are the most precious part of them, which parents, above all other considerations, ought to be concerned to preserve untainted with the defilements of this world.

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There is no better rule to proceed and act by in this important task, than the Spirit of truth, promised to lead us into all truth. If we mind this, we shall not indulge our children in any individual thing which that testifies against in ourselves. We shall be far from pleading, that because they are young, some greater liberties may be allowed them in dress or otherwise; but as they are a part of ourselves, the same divine law should be a standing rule for the whole.

I have taken notice, that divers parents, who, as to their outward appearance, seem to have learned, in degree, the lesson of humility and self-denial, however as far as could be discovered by their dress and address, yet seem to have no aversion to their children's making a different appearance; nay, some will even introduce them into it themselves whilst very young; by which it is plain they have a pride in seeing them so, and cannot help (notwithstanding their outward shew) discovering great unsoundness, and that they themselves are not what they would pass for. I sincerely wish that parents, who are apt to indulge wrong liberties in their children, by suffering them to deviate from that pure simplicity and self-denial Truth led our ancestors, and still leads those who follow it into, would consider, in the first place, the injury their children sustain thereby, by being placed in a difficult and dangerous situation with respect to temptations, which may be presented to them by the children of the land, or of the world: for doubtless the more like them they appear, the

more free and intimate will such make themselves with them, that they may be drawn out into undue liberties; whereas, did they make an appearance quite consistent with their plain self-denying profession, that sort would be more backward to attempt an access to them.

There is no doubt with me, but this has opened a way for many under our profession to ruin themselves, by going out in marriage; and their parents have been, by their imprudent indulgence, the original cause thereof. For suffering them to be so much like the world, and so little like what Truth leads into, they are put out of the way of the best connexions in marriage amongst us, *viz.* the most religious; as such dare not seek to, nor join with, those who give way to undue liberties: I mean such as Truth doth not allow us, as people who ought in all things to hold up a true standard to the nations, to continue in. Here inconsiderate tender youth, through their aptness to crave the glittering gaiety of the world, and their much more imprudent parents indulging them therein, are, as it were, prepared for ruin, unless divine mercy interpose; and are also removed out of the way of the greatest blessing that can be enjoyed in the things of this life; *viz.* a truly religious husband or wife.

Some parents have been pierced through with much sorrow by such means, and have had great cause to repent when it was too late, and there hath been reason to fear that the blood of their children would be required at their hands. Oh! how dishonourably

honourably have some leaned to unsuitable connexions for their children, when there hath been a large outward prospect! It is to be feared divers parents have looked at little else. This hath sometimes appeared to have been the case, by the slight put upon the offers of those, who have wanted nothing to recommend them but wealth; the want of which, in the eye of such, has proved so offensive, that they seem to have been rejected on that account. This is very wrong, and ought never to have entrance amongst any professing the Christian name; "For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof*".

Some perhaps may think I am very close and severe upon parents; that it is not always their fault when children take undue liberties; (which I have already granted) that they are frequently very self-willed and ungovernable. This is indeed saying something, when children become their own rulers by age, or otherwise, and have to cloath and provide for themselves; but I think it has little weight whilst their parents provide for them, who have not only power to advise and persuade, but also to command and restrain. They certainly may and ought to be absolute, in cases where the testimony of truth is in danger of suffering.

It is very observable, that *Eli* was greatly blamed, because he, having power, did not restrain his wicked sons; though it plainly appears he much

* These hints are not intended to encourage any to aspire after great things; but that all should, with a single eye, earnestly seek for divine counsel, both in making and accepting offers for marriage.

disapproved of their practices, and expostulated with them on that account, and laid before them the pernicious consequences of their evil conduct. Oh! how very affecting it is, to consider the fearful calamities which came upon that house; and also upon *Israel*, probably in some measure on the same account.

The neglect and imprudent indulgence of parents in the training up their children, is also a painful loss to the society, as the consequence thereof tends greatly to obstruct the progress of truth, by standing in the way of serious enquirers as stumbling-blocks; when it is seen by such, that the same undue liberties they are called out of, are indulged amongst us, they are offended. Oh! that parents, children, and all who are unfaithful, and who easily suffer the important branches of our Christian testimony to fall (as indeed they would all appear, if they were seen in a true light) would deeply consider the mournful consequence thereof, by retarding the progress of truth, and grievously eclipsing the beauty of *Sion*! Then I greatly hope a more lively zeal and holy ardour would prevail, and that the careless sons and daughters thereof would arise, and shake themselves from the dust of the earth, putting on the beautiful garment of holiness and truth, that she might become more and more a praise in the earth.

Having offered a few remarks concerning the important duty of parents, it now remains to do the same respecting the indispensable duty of children to *honour and obey their parents in the Lord*

which

which is strongly enjoined in the holy scriptures, and, in the nature of things, of lasting and indispensable obligation.

The command is, "Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the Land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." ^{Exod. xx. 12.} Read *Matt.* xv. 4. *Mark* vii. 10. *Luke* xviii. 20. *Eph.* vi. 2, 3. In that which is consistent with the law of God, no children can stand acquitted before the supreme Judge, for disobeying or dishonouring their parents. This obedience and honour not only extend to the yielding to what they enjoin or direct, but also to the preservation of a reverent awe, and honourable esteem in the heart, arising from a bottom of love, which would on all just occasions cherish and protect them. It is a sin of a deep dye to disregard and slight parents, as appears by *Deut.* xxvii. 16. "Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother;" and *Prov.* xxx. 17. "The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it." Chap. xxiii. 22. "Hearken unto thy father, and despise not thy mother when she is old." Chap. xxviii. 24. "Whoso robbeth his father or his mother, and saith, It is no transgression, the same is the companion of a destroyer."

On the other hand, very memorable was the kind and watchful Providence which attended such as feared the Lord, and those who loved, honoured, and obeyed their parents; as *Jacob*,

Dan. iii.

Joseph, Ruth, Samuel, and David; also the *Rechabites*. Read the account concerning them, *Jer. xxxv*. Respecting such as lived in the fear of the Lord, let me recommend the case of *Daniel*, and the three children, who, because of their faithfulness to God, were preserved unhurt, when by their adversaries exposed to the greatest torment and danger.

It would far exceed the bounds of my intention, to particularize all those excellent patterns and examples we are favoured with the account of, which are wonderfully adapted to instruct, encourage, and improve the youth, as well as others. There are also, for caution and warning, examples and very affecting instances of fearful judgments and dreadful calamities, which fell upon the rebellious and gainfayers. May the tender minds of youth, by reading these things, (as recorded in the holy scriptures and other good books) be deeply impressed with proper sentiments concerning good and evil, and the very different rewards of virtue and vice, both in this world, and in the world to come.

2 Tim. iii.
15, 16, 17.

It is a very commendable, as well as a very profitable thing, to be conversant in those sacred writings. Remember what *Paul* said of his beloved son *Timothy*, viz. "From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture given by inspiration of God, is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that

“ that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly
“ furnished unto all good works.” But let the
youth and all duly consider, that the profiting by
these sacred writings entirely depends upon the
holy living powerful faith of Christ, which worketh
by love, purifying the heart; and whereby we
come to see him who is invisible, and consequently
to understand the precious mysteries of his king-
dom, as far as is proper and necessary for us to
know them, which is all that is lawful for us to
desire. There are many other good and profitable
books, but none in which is contained such a store
of rich treasure, and sublime heavenly mysteries,
wonderfully wrapped up, and entirely concealed
from earthly wisdom and carnal policy. For none
can know the things of God without the assistance
of his Spirit, as appears by 1 *Cor.* ii. 10. to 15.
and in many other places too tedious to enu-
merate.

Great hath been the concern of the church in
its largest collective body; as appears by frequent
and very pressing affectionate advice, caution, and
counsel to the youth, to read the holy scriptures,
and other profitable books, carefully to refrain from
all such which may have the least tendency to
alienate their minds from the holy fear of God,
and a sober virtuous course of life, or which are
barely for amusement, being unprofitable; whereas
time is very precious, short, and uncertain; there-
fore it should be carefully improved to the soul’s
everlasting advantage. Moreover, that the youth
do yield strict and careful obedience to the Divine
Monitor

Gen. xxiv.

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Numb. xxv.

Monitor within, to parents, and all those who have the rule over them without, carefully to shun the vain unprofitable amusements, as well as the corrupt conversation of the world: earnestly admonishing all, to avoid every thing in their dress and address, which might have the least tendency to render them suitable for an intercourse, league, or amity with the children of the land; or of a depraved degenerate world, that wallows in pollution and great defilements, lest they should be drawn aside, as *Dinah* was, by going out to see the daughters of the land; and as the children of *Israel* were, by their woeful intimacy with the daughters of *Moab* and *Midian*. Read the whole chapter; not forgetting the dreadful fall of *Solomon*, the wisest king, who, by contracting intimacy with those that were strangers to God, and his holy covenant, came to have his heart drawn away from the living and true God, who had appeared to him in *Gibeon*; and so greatly debased himself, as to bow down to their paltry dumb idols. Time would fail to recapitulate one half of the mournful instances recorded in the holy scriptures, and other authentick accounts, concerning the hurtful consequences of God's people mixing and joining with the nations. It is their safety to be separate, and to dwell alone.

Numb.
xxiii. 9.

Our youth have been also highly favoured with a living powerful ministry, which hath often reached the *Witness of God in their hearts*. What a wonderful favour is this! when we consider that the greatest part of *Christendom*, almost ever since the apostles days, have deprived themselves thereof,

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by substituting human wisdom and learning in its place; so that the panting thirsty soul could meet with little from their ministers, but the muddy nauseous waters of *Babylon* to drink; neither could they direct to the pastures of Christ's flock; but counsel was darkened by a multitude of words without knowledge, and the commandments of God made void by the precepts, inventions, and injunctions of men. What a blessed time is your lot cast in, even when evangelical Light and Truth hath discovered itself in perfect purity! Oh! that our youth would consider and deeply ponder in their hearts, that notwithstanding the great and earnest labours many ways bestowed in godly love and zeal for the whole society's preservation in the way of truth and righteousness, yet very sorrowful and obvious hath been the declension in practice of many amongst us. A mournful inundation of undue liberties has flowed in; many have made grievous advances in those corrupt perishing pleasures, and trifling amusements, which our truly pious predecessors wholly denied, and turned their backs upon, and have left us large and lively testimonies, by way of warning and caution, carefully to avoid being entangled with such yokes of bondage. All these things have prevailed for want of abiding in the fear of God, and duly considering that he is ever present, beholding all our words and actions, be they ever so much concealed from the view of mortals; yet he knows them altogether. When the mind is suffered to turn to his pure Witness in the heart, we find reproof, correction,

rection, and judgment, for giving way to wrong things: and as the youth abide in subjection thereunto, they will be afraid to transgress its pure law in the mind; which they will find agree exactly with the precepts and injunctions recorded in holy writ, respecting their duty to God, to their parents, and all mankind.

The reason why many, who see their duty, fail in the performance, is their departing from the perfect law of liberty, and of the Spirit of life in their minds. They may be informed concerning their duty by outward means and law: but the ability is only to be found arising from the inward law, agreeable to *Rom. viii. 2.* "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." In obedience and humble subjection to this holy law, youth would enjoy that pure peace, heavenly serenity, and sweet consolation of soul, which infinitely surpasseth all the treasures and pleasures of the earth; and would have a well-grounded hope of a happy eternity. It is the adversary that leads to that obduracy and self-willed rebellious state of mind, to be observed in some of the youth, who, by their uncontrollable dispositions, administer great sorrow and anxiety to their parents and friends, being puffed up with vain conceits in their unexperienced minds, that they are more capable of judging for themselves, than those of greater experience are for them; by reason whereof too many, it is to be feared, have rushed on to the ruin of body and soul.

Very

Very great is the danger when the young and unexperienced are proud and opinionated. This naturally raises above instruction, putting them out of the way of being truly profitable, either to themselves or others. Such, unless their hearts are mercifully turned by a supernatural power, are never likely to be fit for governing families, or to act as members in the church of God. Seeing, unless their unmortified wills and tempers are submitted to (however unreasonable) they will break the peace of society, and violate the wholesome order thereof, being like the unsubjected bulls of *Bashan*.

When any assume the outward form of religion, and take upon them to be active members, without a change of heart, they prove a painful burthen to living members; neither can such make suitable help-mates as husbands or wives; nor can they in that state rightly fill up the honourable stations of parents, masters and mistresses, friends, neighbours, or tradesmen. I do therefore, in much affection, and desire for the welfare of tender youth, caution and warn them carefully to avoid the company and conversation of such, though under the same profession; who disregard their parents, and those who have the rule over them; who slight or speak contemptuously of their betters, such as ministers and elders, &c. or of the Christian advices frequently given forth by the yearly and other meetings, or of the wholesome discipline established amongst us as a people in the wisdom of truth: do not join such in marriage, however great the

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outward

outward prospect may appear ; for tender religious minds cannot be happy with such in that connection. And as the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and that which makes and keeps the heart clean, learn it in tender age ; by it you will be taught to remember your Creator in the days of your youth, and, agreeable to the injunction of our blessed Lord, to seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all things necessary here will be added. Divine wisdom, as it is regarded, will direct your steps in the course of this short pilgrimage, in the choice of proper help-mates, and all other affairs of consequence. The same watchful Providence will be over you in care, guidance, and protection, if you look to it, which attended those who lived in his fear, as you may read in the holy scriptures.

It greatly behoves you to look diligently to the foot-steeps of Christ's companions, who walked with him through many tribulations, having washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Be truly contented with that low, humble, self-denying way which you see they walked in ; you can never mend it. If you seek more liberty than that allows of, it will only bring upon you darkness, pain, and vexation of spirit. Take notice of friends writings in early times, and for a considerable number of years, how wonderfully the power and love of God was with them, and how marvellously they were protected amidst the raging foaming waves of earthly powers, combined to lay waste the heritage. What encour-

raging and excellent accounts had they to leave upon record for us, concerning the mighty powerful overshadowing of the canopy of heavenly love and life in their religious assemblies, and of the glory of God shining forth amongst them ! This, through the mercy of God, is not departed ; though there have been some removes thereof.

Dearly beloved youth : Lay to heart the great slackness of zeal which appears in too many ; the dimness, flatness, and the painful gloominess, which spreads itself over our assemblies in this our day, hard to break through, many times depriving us of the heavenly places in Christ Jesus our Lord ! It is not of Him we are in this condition, but it certainly is our own fault, because wrong things are suffered to prevail. Oh ! that our youth may be stirred up in a godly zeal to cry out fervently with the prophet *Elisha*, “ Where is the Lord ^{2 Kings ii.} “ God of *Elijah* ? ” And to be as vigilant as he ^{14.} in ardent endeavours to be endued with the same Spirit, to succeed those honourable worthies who are removed from works to receive a blessed reward. Consider the business of your day is to come up in a faithful succession, maintaining the cause and testimony of God, left with you by your ancestors, or those who are removed as above. Stand fast therefore in the liberty purchased for you by great sufferings, and shedding of innocent blood ; be afraid to trample thereon ; which all certainly do, who turn away from the truth, as it was received, held forth, and maintained by them. May it be very precious in your eyes from generation

ration to generation, until time shall be no more ! Those who otherwise esteem it, turning their backs thereupon, violating the blessed testimony thereof in its several branches, will (unless they repent) be wholly rejected and cast off, as being unworthy of so great an honour, as that of holding forth a standard of truth and righteousness to the nations ; and others will be called and chosen for that great and glorious work : yea, the Lord is able to raise up of those who may be compared to the stones, and to make them *Abraham's* children, by doing his works ; while those, who might have been the children of the kingdom, may by disobedience provoke him to exclude them.

Rev. iii. 17.
12.

I shall conclude this affectionate address to our youth with the words of Christ, by his faithful servant *John*, to the church in *Philadelphia*, “ Be-
 “ hold I come quickly ; hold that fast which thou
 “ hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that
 “ overcometh, will I make a pillar in the temple
 “ of my God, and he shall go no more out ; and
 “ I will write upon him the name of my God,
 “ and the name of the city of my God, which is
 “ *New Jerusalem*, which cometh down out of hea-
 “ ven from my God : and I will write upon him
 “ my new name.”

CHAPTER

CHAPTER II.

Containing some brief Observations concerning the
NATURE and NECESSITY of the NEW BIRTH.

THE standing doctrine preached by our Lord Jesus Christ to *Nicodemus*, of the necessity of being born again, *John* iii. 3—8. and what is delivered by *John the Baptist* concerning the baptism of Christ with the Holy Ghost and fire, being the same in substance, which is also set forth by the prophet *Malachi*, under the lively metaphors of a *refiner's fire*, a *purifier of silver*, and *fuller's soap*, with many other passages of like import in holy writ, although of the utmost consequence to be rightly understood, weightily considered, and deeply pondered by all, is by the generality much overlooked, and amazingly neglected. That which alone can lay a sure foundation for happiness, both in time and eternity, is hardly thought of by many with desire, or even with any degree of seriousness; unless it be to shun and evade the force of that power, which thereby would separate them from their beloved lusts, and fleshly gratifications. In order to effect this, many and exceedingly absurd have been the conjectures and dreams of a great part of mankind; but all to shun the cross; that corrupt self, with all its seeming rich treasure and adorning, might be saved. This self, in many, has been more fond of a religious kind of ornament and treasure, than those of any other sort; towards whom the subtle transformer hath not been

Matth. iii.
10, 11, 12.

Mal. iii. 1.
2, 3, 4.

been wanting plentifully to furnish all those minds who have a religious turn. Antichrist, as an eminent * author observes, can bring forth in his church a likeness or imitation of every thing that is to be found in *Sion*. O then! how greatly it behoves mankind to press after a certainty; since nothing can possibly center the soul in a more deplorable state, than a mistake of this kind.

But some are apt to doubt whether such a thing as an infallible evidence of our adoption is attainable here; though so fully asserted in the holy scriptures. This is not to be wondered at, with respect to those who are in the natural, unrenewed state; seeing the natural man, according to *Paul's* doctrine, "understandeth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither indeed can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." But I am persuaded none, who have really experienced the new birth, remain doubtful or scrupulous concerning this important truth. It seems to me altogether unreasonable to suppose Infinite Goodness, who knows the fallibility and great weakness of his creature man, should leave any, whose hearts are fully devoted to yield obedience to his will, in a state liable to mistake the same, or in any wise ignorant of his divine approbation, upon a careful discharge of their duty to him. This holy evidence in faithful souls is indeed the white stone, and in it a new name written, which none know save those who receive it; being an assurance that their names are written in heaven: from

* I. Penington.

whence

whence arises a joy, which is unspeakable and full of glory.

A sense of the wrath of God against evil, doth often make deep impressions upon the minds of many; so that they in painful remorse are ready to cry out for mercy and forgiveness of their sins. And seeing this sensibility upon the mind of man, that he hath displeased his Creator, neither doth nor can proceed from any thing in man, but the pure witness of God placed there; so it is quite reasonable to conclude, that this divine Witness, upon our faithfully discharging the duty we owe to God, according to its discoveries, will impress our minds with a sweet sense of divine approbation, agreeable to *Rom. viii. 16.* "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." With many other passages in holy writ of like import.

When any are really disposed to be religious, great care should be taken in their first setting out. Many have been marred upon the wheel, for want of patience to endure proper tempering; endeavouring to be formed into vessels, before they have passed through the necessary operation. This has been for want of thoroughly knowing themselves. For every thing that appertains to the creaturely will, and forwardness of desire to chuse and act for itself, must die upon the cross; therefore there must be a remaining as a chaos without form and void, to endure all sorts of storms and tempests, until the effective Word saith, *Let there be light!* making by his own power a perfect separation between

tween the light and darkness in the little world, (*viz.* man) as he did in the great world. Until this is really experienced, man is not in a condition to be placed upon the wheel, to be formed into a vessel of honour. But there must be a time for drying, and enduring the furnace.

These wonderful operations, which I have, in an allegorical way, only just touched upon, must necessarily make very deep and lasting impressions upon all, who have been so happy as so far to experience the nature of that regeneration, without which none can see the kingdom of God. When any are come thus far, there will be no occasion to make use of dreams and uncertain conjectures in forming a judgment concerning their adoption. That divine birth which is raised in them, naturally cries, *Abba, Father!* leaving them no room to doubt, when he is pleased to appear (which they are taught to wait in the patience for) of their having passed from death unto life; or being translated from under the power of darkness into the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ; which consisteth in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

The great danger of man's being deceived lies in the mysterious workings of Satan, who has a strong hold in those, who, upon their first awakening by the call of Christ, have not suffered his power so far to prevail, as to make them willing to part with all for his sake. There is something exceedingly reluctant in the strong spirit and will of man, to the falling into nothingness of self, and

and be wholly given up to be guided and upheld by another. This in part arises from the excellency of his frame, and nobility of his understanding, who finds himself in naturals capable of effecting great things, and knows not, till his eyes are opened and enlightened from above, but that he is equally capable of comprehending what relates to him concerning the world to come. Instead therefore of wholly ceasing from his own will, and relying altogether upon the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he is very apt to be active, and imagines God will be pleased with his diligence, in the performance of what he apprehends to be religious duties; such as praying, singing, preaching, or eagerly seeking to join others in those performances; often telling his experiences, and hearing those of others. Whereas it would be abundantly more pleasing to the Almighty, and profitable to himself, to lay his mouth in the dust, silently to commune with his own heart, and be still, until it shall please the Lord to send forth his light and his truth, that the poor helpless creature may move and act in a religious sense, with an understanding informed thereby: seeing every thing that is done in religion and worship, without the sensible guidance of the Holy Spirit, is will-worship and idolatry: for if the Spirit of Christ doth not move and actuate us in religious performances, we are liable to the influences of the spirit of anti-christ.

Yet some perhaps, by way of excuse for their not being influenced by the Spirit of Truth in their

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religion,

religion, are ready to call it enthusiasm and presumption in those who assert the necessity thereof, seeming to imagine there is no such thing in our time to be relied upon; yet they will readily own it was so in the apostles days. But they can give no good reason why the same divine power and efficacy should forsake the true church; since mankind have equal need thereof, and the nature of God's dispensation is now the same as it was then.

Common prudence teacheth us to examine strictly into the clearness and validity of our titles to earthly estates, that we may be fully satisfied we are not deceived or imposed upon by false glosses and specious pretences. Shall we be less solicitous about that which is of infinitely greater moment; viz. our title to an everlasting inheritance? Man should be very jealous over his own heart, which is apt to be partial towards itself, and, through the transformation of Satan, to soothe and flatter him into an apprehension that he is in the way to everlasting happiness, when in reality it is quite otherwise. But, alas! his criterion to form a judgment of himself by may be the same as that of the *Pharisee*, who went up to the temple to pray, or rather to recapitulate his own supposed excellencies. He perhaps measures himself by himself, or by comparing his principles and conduct in life with those of others; whereas nothing should be received as a standard in this very important case, but the stamp of divine approbation upon the heart; agreeable to *Rom. viii. 14, 15,*

16. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."

Having offered a few hints by way of caution, in order that all into whose hands this shall come may examine themselves without partiality, lest they fall inadvertently into an irretrievable mistake respecting the eternal salvation of their own souls, I shall now endeavour to set forth, from mine own experience, a little of the nature of that new birth, without which none can see the kingdom of God; consequently are no true members of his church, which is his kingdom, and frequently called heaven, and the kingdom of heaven, in the holy scriptures. It cannot therefore be supposed, that a person wholly unregenerate can be properly qualified for the performance of any religious duty, or even the least service in that kingdom, which he doth not so much as see.

I have, by experience from my childhood, found two spirits or seeds striving in me for mastery or rule: I have discovered them to be irreconcilable enemies one to the other; and that I could not serve them both at the same time. I had an understanding given me, whereby I knew one of those seeds was a measure of the All-powerful Inexhaustible Source of Goodness; and the other, which had indeed in a manner leavened the whole

lump, was of a wicked and diabolical nature. By means of this corrupt leaven, I had a strong bias to evil of many kinds; nevertheless, I often found the good striking at the evil, as an ax laid to the root thereof, agreeable to *Matth. iii. 10.* in order to destroy that which deprived the Heir of all things of his inheritance. I was long in a kind of suspense, unresolved which to join with; yet saw all depended upon my determination, and that I had full power of choice. On the one hand, when the awakening visitations of God's Spirit were upon me, it appeared very dreadful to provoke an Omnipotent Being, of unmerited kindness and mercy, to cast my soul into everlasting perdition. On the other hand, especially when those blessed impressions were somewhat worn off, it was next to death itself to yield up all my sensual gratifications, and to expose myself to the scorn and contempt of the world. However, in process of time, the Lord in gracious condescension broke in upon my soul, by his judgments mixed with mercy, in such a powerful manner, as that I was made willing to yield up thereunto, come life or death. For indeed I looked for nothing else at that time, but really expected my frail body would sink down under the weight of that unspeakable distress which was upon me, and that my sinful soul must be centered in a state of everlasting misery. Now the cry was with *Saul*, afterwards *Paul*, with trembling and astonishment, "Lord! what wilt thou have me to do?" There was no holding back, or secret reserve then, but whatever

whatever was called for was given up with all readiness: this being all I could then do. As to performing religious duties, I had them all to learn, though I had been trained up from my infancy in a strict religious way by godly parents. But the very best outward helps, and the most consistent set of religious principles, only professed, cannot at all enrich the soul with heavenly grace.

By carefully enquiring as above, I soon clearly perceived my business was to watch and pray continually; to commune with mine own heart, or the Witness of God therein, that I might receive fresh instruction and help as I had need. Self-denial, and taking up the cross daily, was to be my constant employ; in the doing whereof I had much inward peace and comfort, and a well-grounded hope that I should thereby find, in the Lord's time, the body of sin so weakened, as that the yoke of Christ would become easy, and his burthen light.

In order to a happy progress in the life of religion, the great thing is, by abiding in the Divine Light, to preserve a clear and distinguishing sensibility between the flesh and the Spirit. There is no doing this without great care and steady attention of mind upon the Divine Gift. If the eye goes from this, it is blinded by the darkness; then the man is liable to be misled by a counterfeit light, and various resemblances, which Satan will cast in his way for guidance and instruction, persuading him all is well and right. To be so misled, and therein established, is a truly deplorable state; it
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being very unlikely such should ever be persuaded to believe they are mistaken, as they often deride whatever appears doubtful concerning their religion and worship. This was evidently the case with a set of professors of uncommon outward sanctity and punctual exactness in the exteriors of their religion, in the time of our Saviour's personal appearance upon earth; notwithstanding which, these very people appeared to be the most inveterate enemies he had amongst mankind. Seeing therefore frail mortals are liable to such dangerous mistakes, how exceedingly circumspect and watchful ought all to be! and what frequent and strict scrutinies ought they to make into the state of their own hearts! which can be known no otherwise by any, but as the Lord is pleased to send forth his heart-searching light. This is a high favour, which none receive but those who are turned from the darkness, and are fervently concerned to put away all the works thereof. Very gross is the deception of those, who imagine the work of their conversion to be an instantaneous work. This can be nothing else but a delusion of Satan, to settle people at rest in a state of self-security as soon as he can. Oh! what a length of time it takes, to work out that rebellious, stiff-necked, backsliding nature, which was born in *Egypt*, before the new generation is raised up, that is fit to enter the promised land!

From what is before hinted, it may be understood, that the Good Seed, or Heavenly Principle, arising into ascendancy in us over the evil seed or principle,

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principle, and leavening the three measures of meal into its own nature, is essentially a being born again, or with water and the Spirit, or being baptized with the Holy Ghost and fire; or man's enduring the operation of the refiner's fire, fuller's soap, and being purified as silver; all which metaphors signify to us, in a very instructive manner, the different operations of the Holy Spirit; which is to the willing soul sometimes as water, to wash and bathe in, and also to drink of freely; at other times as a refiner's fire, to purge away the filth and dross, that man may be as pure gold, prepared to receive the image and superscription of the King of Heaven; that so, where-ever he goes, or whatever he doth, all who have their eyes opened may see whose subject he is.

It is very observable, that the prophet *Malachi*, when he had elegantly set forth the nature of the new birth, breaks out in the fourth verse of the third chapter on this wise: "Then shall the offerings of *Judah* and *Jerusalem* be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in former years;" which clearly implies man's unacceptable state with his Maker in any religious performances, until he hath previously known the cleansing and refining operations before-mentioned. What then will become of those who have intruded themselves into religious services, and amongst his faithful followers, not having on the wedding-garment! who would pass for his people, yet cannot find, by examining the state of their minds respecting religion, that they have trod the path of rege-

regeneration, nor passed through the many and various pangs of the new birth.

When man hath, through the powerful prevalence of the Divine Principle, obtained victory in a good degree over evil, his soul abounds with evidence and tokens of his happy attainments, through the Lord Jesus Christ; to whom with the Father, through the influence of the Holy Spirit, praise, adoration, and thanksgiving, are offered up as incense with acceptance; he enjoys an abundant flow of heavenly love; to those especially of the same lineage, begotten of the same Everlasting Father, agreeable to *1 John* iii. 14. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." It is then become as his meat and drink to do the will of God; he looks with indifference upon worldly enjoyment, when compared with religion and the weighty concerns thereof; his body, soul, and outward substance are offered up to the Great Giver; being given up to spend and to be spent for the promotion of truth, according to the degree of its requirings; careful that all he doth may tend to God's glory. These particulars, and much more than I can set forth, are done from a mature result of a well-informed understanding and sound judgment, which cannot fail of producing great peace and heavenly solace, whereby he is mightily encouraged to persevere.

Oh! that mankind would but come clearly to see the necessity of beginning in the Spirit, and walking therein, agreeable to the advice and practice

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tice of the primitive Christians ! then they would not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. The spirit that lusteth to envy, and seeks vengeance, would be slain. Here outward wars and fightings would cease of course ; the cause being taken away, the effect would be no more. A selfish covetous spirit, which seeks undue advantage to the injury of others, would be purged out. Here we should have power to love our neighbours as ourselves, and to do unto all as we should be done unto, were we in their situation. All these, and many more good fruits, would spring up naturally from the new creation in Christ Jesus our Lord. But those who have not the ground-work in themselves, and lack the virtues of the Holy Spirit, which are set forth in the scriptures of truth, are blind, and cannot see that it is possible to attain those exalted Christian virtues now as it was in the apostles days ; and therefore imaginations, dreams, and conjectures abound amongst outside Christians (who are numerous) concerning the way and means of obtaining that salvation which comes only by being born from above. Some say, Lo ! here is Christ ! Others say, Lo ! he is there ! but still evade the cross. If that did not stick in the way, they would surely embrace the right thing, as it is so fully set forth and described in the holy scriptures.

The testimonies thereof have enforced, however, an assent to the truth of the doctrine of the new birth, both in Papists and Protestants. But alas ! their apprehensions concerning its nature are ex-

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ceedingly

ceedingly obscure and carnal, making the sprinkling of infants with a little water (which they call baptism) essential thereunto; nay, the manner of their expressing themselves on this subject, in the confession of their faith to the world, seems in my apprehension to make that ceremony all, or the chief, that is intended by being born from above; or that the operations of the Spirit for that end are infallibly connected to the operation of water. Papists say, "We must believe that Jesus Christ
 " has instituted in his church seven sacraments, or
 " mysterious signs and instrumental causes of di-
 " vine grace in the soul: baptism, by way of a
 " new birth, by which we are made children of
 " God, and washed from sin: confirmation, by
 " which we receive the Holy Ghost by the im-
 " position of the hands of the successors of the
 " apostles *, &c." The Protestant Church of
England saith, in confessing their faith to the
 world, "In my baptism (they mean sprinkling
 " infants) wherein I was made a member of Christ,
 " the child of God, and an inheritor of the king-
 " dom of heaven." After an infant is sprinkled,
 the priest says, "Seeing now, dearly beloved bre-
 " thren, that this child is by baptism regenerate
 " and grafted into the body of Christ's church,
 " let us give thanks, &c." And again, "We
 " yield thee most hearty thanks, most merciful
 " Father, that it hath pleased thee to regenerate
 " this infant with thy Holy Spirit, to receive him

* Popish Manual of Spiritual Exercises, page 4.

“ for thy own child by adoption, and to incorporate him into thy holy church *, &c.”

From these evasions it appears man hates death to self, and had rather look any way than that which is likely to strip him of all his beloved treasure; though if he was not very blind and ignorant concerning his true interest, he would easily see that his supposed loss would make way for his greatest gain. However, this unhappy reluctance in man to the true way, has put him upon straining his invention, to find an easier way to the kingdom of felicity, of becoming heir of two kingdoms; of serving God and mammon, though we are assured that is impossible. Many would fain imagine, that man may be saved merely by the imputation of Christ's righteousness; which, if it were true, would be a mighty palatable doctrine to a multitude of self-lovers. Some, who do not fall in with this opinion, but believe they must repent, and that they ought to experience the evil purged out by the spirit of judgment and burning, do yet put off this great work, resting with a kind of hope, that they shall be fitted for everlasting happiness thereby some time before they go hence; and build much upon the great mercy and long-suffering of the Almighty, catching eagerly at the sudden conversion of *Paul*, and of the thief upon the cross. Oh! how exceeding inconsiderate are such delays! A saying of *Crysostom* is worthy to be noted, viz. “ God promises “ mercy to penitent sinners, but he doth not pro-

* Catechism and Publick Baptism,

“mise them, that they shall have so much time
 “as to-morrow for their repentance!” Others there
 be, who imagine conversion is effected in an instant; and in order that their deception may be effectual, the false prophet causes fire to come down as from heaven in their sight; he that is prince in the airy region, raises vehement heats and agitations upon their passions. This they call the workings of the Spirit upon them for their conversion; immediately after which a kind of heaven is formed, wherein they take their rest with a seeming security, erroneously supposing their calling and election are made sure, and that they can never fall from saving grace, which they doubt not of having in their possession. Oh! how dangerous is such a security!

Much more might be written concerning the many false rests and visionary heavens which poor mortals, through the subtlety of Satan, and their own inattention, are deluded to repose themselves in; which might all be happily prevented, were they to enter into the sheepfold by *Christ*, the door and way to the everlasting kingdom, which is opened and prepared for the soul to travel in, by his inward appearance, as before noted. He will certainly count all thieves and robbers, who come into his church any other way.

What abundance of robbery is found in thee, *O Christendom!* what stealing the name of Christ, and the experience of God's people formerly, to live upon, and also to feed one another with! Oh, what multitudes there are of unwholesome barren
 pastors,

pastors, and poor, lean, starved flocks, amongst most or all societies of Christian professors ! Their poor low condition, as to religion, induces them to put forth their hands and steal. Can the God of justice and truth delight in robbery for burnt-offerings ? No ; such sacrifices are an abomination to him. His regenerate ones, though often tried with great poverty of spirit, dare not steal ; knowing nothing will find acceptance with the Source of Infinite Goodness, but that which is of his own immediate begetting. He will smell a sweet savour from that, although it be but a sigh or a groan ; which may be compared with the acceptable offering of the poor under the law, of a pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons ; and with the widow's two mites cast into the treasury, taken notice of by our Lord. Those poor humble dependant ones, who are made perfectly honest by the just and upright principle prevailing in them, and waiting the Lord's time, may be, and often are, furnished with larger offerings, and do greatly increase with the increase of God.

Mark xii.
42. to the
end.

To conclude this head, I shall thus sum up the matter ; *viz.* that man's great business, upon his first awakening out of the sleep or stupefaction of sin, is passively to yield himself into the hands of his faithful Creator, that he may be pleased to work in and upon him, to will and to do of his own good pleasure. His soul must, with the utmost care, endeavour to abide in that which enables incessantly to pray, " Thy kingdom come, and thy will be done on earth, as it is done in
" heaven."

"heaven." This bent of heart, through the grace of God, is a sufficient guard or defence against all the subtle attempts of Satan to beguile and deceive, and nothing else. The most crafty devices of the adversary can never prevail to pluck such an one out of the Almighty's hands; and by abiding therein, he is created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works, having spiritual senses given, that he may continually exercise them in discerning between good and evil. His heart being made pure in a good degree by the sprinkling of the most precious blood of Christ, his constant care is, through Divine assistance, to preserve it so, that he may be pleased to tabernacle with him, on whom help is laid; who is made of God, to such passive upright souls, their wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. They receive from him those qualifications, which enable them to co-work with the Spirit, and perfectly to understand the proper business of their day, both in the world as strangers and pilgrims, and in the church of Christ, as living members thereof.

CHAPTER III.

Relating to the NATURE of TRUE WORSHIP; with some Remarks upon the State of our Society, both as in early Times, and now.

THE nature of acceptable worship is set forth by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, in a manner wonderfully adapted to the subject; viz. that it is to be performed in *Spirit and in Truth*. John iv. 23. The reason is given, "Because God is a Spirit;" Ver. 24. and therefore, "they that worship him, must worship him in Spirit and in Truth." Not in the ceremonial, shadowy, and typical worship of the Jews; (tho' because of weakness it was dispensed to them, until a better hope, and more excellent worship was brought in; whereby man has a nearer access to the Divinity, and a better knowledge of himself: here such a brightness of heavenly glory appears, as causeth all signs, figures, and types, to vanish away) but in the truth and real substance of all that was typified and prefigured by the ceremonial law of *Moses*, the righteousness of that law being fulfilled in those who walk and worship in the Spirit.

The soul must bow in perfect sincerity, humble prostration, and a deep inward sense of its own frailty, want, and unworthiness; being at the same time deeply impressed with a lively sense of the Lord's adorable greatness and goodness; from which sensibility renewed upon the mind, by Him alone who is the sole object of worship, thanksgiving

giving and praises ascend, for the multitude of his mercies received, and reverent prayer, either mental or vocal (according as the mind feels itself influenced or directed by the Holy Anointing) for the continuance of his gracious preservation in the way of righteousness; agreeable to *Eph. vi. 18.*

“Praying always with all supplication in the Spirit,
“and watching thereunto with all perseverance,
“and supplication for all saints.”

It is clearly to be understood, by what our Lord said to the woman of *Samaria* before-mentioned, that acceptable worship is not to be confined to any particular place, mode, form, or ceremony whatsoever; which was a deception mankind had too generally fallen into, and greatly wanted to be drawn from, being then, as well as now, too apt to rest satisfied with exterior performances; which altho' some of them once were to the Jews in condescension dispensed, yet not even then substituted in the place of spiritual worship, nor at all acceptable without the bowing of the soul as above. But now our Lord shews the outward was to be laid aside, and not to continue in his glorious spiritual dispensation any longer; a dangerous snare for man to please himself with and rest in. But it could hardly be expected that so much, or so great a mass of outward observations could be cast off all at once; yet in the apostles days the church was wonderfully (for the time) brought out of them, as appears by those few things laid upon the *Gentiles*. But alas! the Christian church (so called) instead of leaving all, and becoming purely spiritual,

spiritual gradually decayed as to life and power, and increased in ceremonies and outward observations, until she became as full of them as ever the Jewish church was. Then she got full possession of the outward court, having nothing to enjoy but her own inventions, and to glory in *Babylon*, which she had built instead of *Sion*, until her measure should be filled up, and her determined overthrow was to take place.

Paul saith to the *Philippians*, “ For we are the Chap. iii. 3.
 “ circumcision which worship God in Spirit, and
 “ rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence
 “ in the flesh.” What circumcision is here intended, appears from *Rom. ii. 28, 29. Col. ii. 11.* That the generality of Christian professors, of every denomination, have lamentably deviated from this kind of worship, requires not much penetration to discover. And tho’ the great Author of the Christian religion hath so fully expressed his will and pleasure in this most important point, yet many will not be satisfied without a kind of worship that the man’s part can be active in; that hath something in it capable to amuse the outward senses: they would yet worship the Most High with human abilities, or the work of men’s hands; and by an unjustifiable veneration, which some endeavour to keep up for old mass houses, and other places of worship, calling them churches, houses of God, holy places, &c. they seem to maintain a doctrine contrary to the testimony of that holy martyr *Stephen*; “ Howbeit the Most High dwelleth not Acts vii. 48.
 “ in temples made with hands, as saith the pro-

Acts xvii.
24, 25.

phet; and that of the great apostle of the Gentiles: "God that made the world, and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as tho' he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things."

Most Protestants, tho' they have cast off much of the *Romish* superstition, still retain some outward ceremonies and observations very unsuitable to the spirituality of the gospel dispensation, for which they have no divine authority, nor any colour of warrant, but what is patched up from the example of some in the primitive church; which being then just arising out of a load of ceremonies, could not be wholly weaned from every thing of that kind at once; and therefore several of these things were for a time condescended unto; it being, tho' a very glorious beginning, but the morning of the gospel-day, and infancy of the Christian church, she wonderfully abounded with heavenly power, in order to make her way in the world. Yet, by the rising higher and higher of the Sun of Righteousness, who rules the everlasting day of God's salvation, she was to put on all her beautiful garments; to make herself quite ready for the bridegroom, and, by a gradual increase of clear discoveries, was to grow into maturity of wisdom, and ripeness of judgment. Our Lord clearly intimates the great danger of tacking any thing of the *old* ceremonial dispensation to the *new* gospel dispensation; shewing they would by no means agree, or safely subsist together. This the

Matth. ix.
16, 17.

the experience of many generations can fully declare. Oh! what rents, schisms, and tearing of the pure undefiled religion of Christ to pieces, have there been by means of retaining some patches of the old garment!

Yet there hath been a godly travail, and an ardent labour preserved, even through the darkest ages of superstition and idolatry, by the true church, tho' hidden from carnal eyes, as in a wilderness, that she might cast off this heavy eclipsing mass of outward observations: there were many risings up, through the divine power, against it, especially the grossest part thereof; but the most extraordinary, as to its consistency with the unmixed purity of the gospel, was about the middle of the last century. Then evangelical light and truth appeared, without the blendings of ceremonies and outward observations. When the Lord, by his over-ruling power, had erected this blessed standard of simple truth, and pure righteousness, many thousands flocked to it, and spoke the language, in a considerable degree, set forth by way of enquiry, *Cant. vi. 10.* "Who is she! that looketh forth as
" the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun,
" and terrible as an army with banners?" Terrible indeed they were to the man of sin, the son of perdition, and were mighty instruments in the Lord's hand to reveal him. A great annoyance they were to the merchants of *Babylon*, and those who enriched themselves by the superstitious wares thereof; which, through the witchcraft and enchantments of the great whore and her daughters,

mankind were deluded to buy of them; tho' now the wicked craft is much more seen in all its transformations, than it was at their first rising.

They endured a great fight of affliction; but through all, they with patient but undaunted firmness maintained their ground, and were made victorious through sufferings, as the Captain of their salvation was. The everlasting gospel was preached by them in great demonstration of the spirit, and with power; in sum and substance as it was to be preached after the apostasy: "Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of water."

Rev. xiv. 7.

This was indeed coming to the substance, after men had wearied themselves with abundance of toil in vain, catching nothing, but vanity and vexation of spirit. If any would receive this gospel, thus preached according to the true intent and meaning thereof, there was no room to evade the cross of Christ, which is the power of God to salvation. There is no liberty here to retain a few ceremonies for decency's sake, and to invite the Papists over, as pretended by Protestants; but all are to embrace the substance, not daring any more to touch the beggarly elements, so much prostituted and defiled during the whole night of apostasy. The virgin daughter of *Sion* is well assured the bridegroom of her soul will never more appear to her in these uncertain polluted things, which have been, and yet will be, more and more terribly shaken, and pass away as a scroll; that those things which

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can never be shaken may remain, agreeable to *Rev. xxi. 1.* " And I saw a new heaven, and a
" new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth
" were passed away; and there was no more sea."
There was no more sea; nothing unstable, fluctuating,
and uncertain; nothing of that element from which
the beast ariseth, and therefore no danger of a
beast rising thence any more. The 2d, 3d, and 4th
verses of the same chapter wonderfully set forth the
glory of the *New Jerusalem* coming down from
above, the tabernacle of God being with men,
and God's dwelling with them; of his wiping
away all tears from their eyes; and that there shall
be no more crying, sorrow, and pain, because the
former things were passed away; *viz.* there was
no more sea; all is purged away which was the
cause of those dreadful calamities and miseries set
forth in this Divine Revelation, by opening the
seven seals, sounding the seven trumpets, and pour-
ing out the seven vials full of the wrath of God,
who liveth for ever and ever. The fifth verse saith,
" And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold,
" I will make all things new!" Now there is
nothing of the old garment, nor old wine left, to
tear and break to pieces the new garment, and the
new bottles. Oh! glorious gospel times! May
the Lord of hosts hasten them more generally in
the kingdoms of the earth!

Having offered a few general observations upon
the state of things, it now remains to make some
further remarks upon those people so remarkably
raised, as before hinted, in the last century, in
this

this our native land: for their beginning and first progress was here; tho' many other lands were also sharers in the brightness of truth's arising in them; and it may without vanity be said, that through them a light hath extended, or at least glanced, over a great part of *Christendom* (so called) which hath discovered the hidden mystery of the false church more clearly than heretofore, and given a great shake to the long-continued kingdom of antichrist. They have been, through Divine Wisdom, established into a firm body, amongst whom subsists the comely order of the gospel, as an hedge, by divine appointment, for their safety and preservation from the destroyer, and out of the polluting defilements of a greatly corrupted world. Notwithstanding which, their preservation doth, and always will, much depend upon their diligently seeking unto, and waiting singly and carefully for a daily renewing of strength and wisdom from above, whereby alone all things must be directed and ordered for their safety and perseverance.

It hath been often accounted by me a great favour and blessing, that my lot was cast in a time when primitive Christianity, in its power and purity, was restored in the world; and that I was so happy as to have my birth and education amongst the before-mentioned people: for tho' that did not make me a real and living member of their body, yet it happily put me more in the way of being so, than if my lot had fallen in some of the foregoing dark ages, and afforded me greater means
of

of restoration, than if I had been educated amongst superstitious bigots; for which favour, enjoyed by me and many others, there must be proportionable returns of thankfulness and obedience, or it will surely add to our condemnation: for where much is given, much will be required.

Before I had quite arrived to man's estate, I was, through merciful goodness operating upon my soul, brought into a better knowledge of, and a nearer intimacy and fellowship with, these people in a spiritual sense, than before, to my unutterable consolation: for I found the glorious Lord was their king and law-giver, and that he was indeed become to them a place of broad rivers and streams; and that man's splendid inventions, such as a galley with oars, and gallant ship, could not pass amongst them: "For the Lord is our judge," Isa. xxxiii. 21.
 "the Lord is our law-giver, the Lord is our king," Ver. 22.
 "he will save us." This was the blessed language founded within their borders. My spirit hath many times been reverently bowed, and awfully prostrated before the Lord, in beholding the comeliness, beautiful situation, and safety of these his people; in an humble sense whereof I have been ready to say, "Happy art thou, O *Israel*! who
 "is like unto thee, O people saved of the Lord!
 "the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of
 "thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found
 "liars unto thee, and thou shalt tread upon their
 "high places!"

It may be objected that the foregoing contains high encomiums on a people, amongst whom we

cannot

cannot discover these excellencies, but have looked upon them as a mean contemptible body, who affect a kind of aukward singularity; and we observe many amongst them as eager after the world, and who love it as well as any people whatever; and others, who take undue liberties, are as deeply involved in the pleasures and gaities of life, and as much strangers to self-denial, as people of other persuasions. *Y* And it is further to be noted, that when we goe to their places of worship, and observe the manner of their sitting in silence, a *Laodicean* lukewarmness is very apparent in many of them, by the easy, careless condition they seem to sit in, at the same time they profess to be waiting in silence of body, and stillness of soul, for the descending of the Holy Ghost, that their spiritual strength may be renewed. Surely, If this is not really so, it must be a mockery and deception of the most contemptible and provoking nature in the sight of an All-seeing Eye. *X*

In order a little to open the state of the case, and to answer the foregoing objections, I shall now make some observations upon the defection in practice that is to be found amongst us as a people, especially of late years, which hath caused abundance of pain and heart-aching distress to the living body, who fervently travail that Christ may be formed in those who have a natural birth-right in the society, which at present seems to be all the title some have to be accounted of us. As to the foregoing part of the objection, this people have been indiscriminately viewed in that light by carnal professors
from

from their first rise, which discovers the same undistinguishing blindness, as always hath deprived the children of this world of seeing any beauty or comeliness in the children of light. I have before noted, that I (tho' educated in the same profession) did not see the Lord was amongst them, in such a manner, until he was pleased to open mine eyes, agreeable to *Matth. xvi. 16. 17.* where our Lord pronounces *Peter* blessed, in that the Father had revealed the Son to him. Chap. *xiii. 16.* he said to his disciples, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear." It is through the same blessing mine eyes are yet preserved open to see, that notwithstanding the great declension in practice, which hath prevailed over many of us as a people, the glory is not departed from amongst us: the King is known by the upright-hearted in his beauty, still reigning. Princes do yet rule in the spirit of judgment given them of God. My faith is, at times, greatly strengthened to believe it will never cease to be so amongst this people, but that they will be preserved by the Almighty power, through all generations, a living body; and that the principles of truth, as held by them, will yet spread far and wide in the kingdoms of the earth. This, I believe, was the blessed end for which they were first raised, and marvelously supported: this glorious work hath been in degree going on, tho' very much impeded by the unfaithfulness of many amongst us, who, like the foolish woman, are in some measure pulling down what the wise woman hath built up. Oh! that all who

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take upon them our holy profession of the unchangeable truth, would deeply consider the weight of that obligation which they take upon themselves thereby ! It is far, O very far ! from being a light easy thing ; as it may, in a proper sense, be esteemed an entering into the solemn covenant those people are bound to by their God, of holding up a standard of truth and righteousness, altogether meet and suitable for the nations, with safety and well-grounded confidence to draw unto ; so that none amongst us need be ashamed to call unto mankind thus ; viz. *Look upon Sion*, the city of our solemnity ! Oh ! it is a lovely sight to behold her walls and bulwarks all salvation, and her gates praise ; when none of her stakes are broken down, nor any of her cords loosened ; being indeed the Lord's habitation, as set forth *Psa.* cxxxii. 13, 14, 15, 16.

“ For the Lord hath chosen *Sion* : he hath desired
 “ it for his habitation. He saith, This is my rest
 “ for ever : here will I dwell, for I have desired
 “ it. I will abundantly bless her provision : I will
 “ satisfy her poor with bread. I will also cloath
 “ her priests with salvation : and her saints shall
 “ shout aloud for joy.”

Many under our religious profession disregarding or lightly esteeming this solemn covenant, and resting in the profession only, is the principal reason that we find divers under our name more insensible, harder to be reached unto and awakened by a living powerful ministry, than people of other religious persuasions. This may seem strange to some, but I know it is lamentably true ; having

frequently felt it so in my gospel labours. To me this doth not appear hard to account for, when it is considered, that amongst us there hath been dispensed greater abundance of spiritual favours, of various kinds, than amongst any society of people that I know of: which hath not proceeded from any partial regard in the Almighty towards us more than others, but the better to enable us to keep our covenant with him, in the discharge of that great work he hath called us to. Where any are so inconsiderate as to disregard and neglect such wonderful opportunities of lasting benefit and improvement, they become more hardened and impenitent than those who have been more out of the way of receiving heavenly impressions. The portion of such, unless they in time embrace the grace of repentance, is very dismal to think of, as in *Prov. xxix. 1.* “He that being often re-

proved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.” And *Heb. vi. 7, 8.* “For the earth that drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: but that which beareth thorns and briars is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing: whose end is to be burned.”

Great indeed hath been the bounty of heaven to us as a people, both immediately, by the solacing influences and guidance of the Holy Spirit to all that would receive it, and also by the abundant flowing of a truly evangelical ministry, raised up and continued for the greatest part of this last

hundred years. But now the society is much stript of a living skilful ministry; yet not, nor I hope ever will be, wholly destitute. This, through the divine blessing, hath been a great means of our being gathered into and preserved a people! but many amongst us have leaned and depended thereupon; and therefore it may be, and I believe it is, consistent with Divine Wisdom, to try how the society will stand without so much outward help in that way; tho' perhaps more may be afforded, in raising up a spirit for promoting sound discipline and good order, which will prove a blessed means of its preservation. And this must be proceeded in by the help and holy influences of the same Spirit, which furnishes the best ministry. It looks as if the Lord was about to make his people still more inward and spiritual, shewing them plainly, that gospel-worship does not depend upon outward means.

It is quite obvious that abundant preaching, praying, and singing, doth not bring a great part of mankind a whit nearer to heaven, nor more acquainted with God and themselves, than they would be without it. So that it may be truly said, and indeed lamented, that they spend their money for that which is not bread, and bestow much labour without real profit to themselves. With respect to us, the ministry approved hath abounded with heavenly bread, and refreshing streams of living water have flowed through the conduits and water-spouts to the plantation of God; and altho' many have not improved thereby, yet some have

grown

grown and flourished. But the Lord of the vineyard cannot be confined to any particular means for the help and preservation of his church, tho' perhaps such as he has made use of in time past; seeing he can make other means, unthought of by short-sighted mortals, as effectual. We may see he made use of the people of *Israel* to fight his battles, wherein they seemed, in some sort, to have been the cause and instruments of their *own deliverance and preservation*: yet it was not always so; for there are divers instances of his destroying his enemies, and working the deliverance of his people immediately by his own power. This appeared more marvellous and astonishing, both to his people and their enemies, than the ordinary means usually employed. Upon the whole, altho' it appears to me something like a chastisement, that so many worthy valiants have been removed, and few raised up in the ministry to succeed them with equal brightness, this may prove a trial, which, to discerning eyes, may fully distinguish between the professor and the possessor in religion; yet I believe the true church will grow under this dispensation of God's dealing with his people. She will be more grounded and settled in that which is within the veil, *viz.* the holy sanctuary and house of prayer. There is her place of safety, quite out of the reach of Satan's transformations.

An holy, awful, silent waiting before God, is spiritual *Israel's* abiding in their tent, where no divination nor enchantment can prevail against them. This is exceeding beautiful, reaching, and convincing

convincing to all, whose spiritual eyes are in degree opened, when they see the things, as set forth *Numb. xxiv. 5, 6, 7.* "How goodly are thy tents, "O *Jacob!* and thy tabernacles, O *Israel!* as the "vallies are they spread forth, as gardens by the "river-side, and as trees of lign-aloes which the "Lord hath planted, and as cedar-trees beside "the water. He shall pour the water out of his "buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters."

Oh! what wonderful encouragement have the Lord's chosen people, to abide faithful in that station wherein he hath placed them, whether in silence or speaking, doing or suffering, prosperity or adversity. There is not the least occasion to be ashamed of silent worship, unless we are so naked, as to be void of a right sense of what true worship is. Then indeed it is exceedingly contemptible, and cannot fail of rendering us more despicable in the eyes of mankind, than such are who have a form, ornamented with man's curious invention and adorning. This must of necessity center all that are so unhappy in that state, set forth by our Lord under the metaphor of, "Salt that hath lost its "favour, which is thenceforth good for nothing, "but to be cast out, and trodden under the feet "of men." Therefore all professors of spiritual worship should greatly fear being found in this dreadful state, of the form truth leads into without the life and power: if that is with them, it will raise them above contempt.

In my travels for the promotion of truth, according to ability-received, which I have been engaged

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engaged in through most parts of our society, I have seen and painfully felt much of this sorrowful idleness and insensibility, which has caused me many days and nights of mourning with sackcloth as it were underneath. I have seen that it proceeds from various causes, but principally from an over-anxiousness in seeking after earthly things, lawful in themselves, but direct idolatry when they have the chief place in the mind, and are made the principal treasure thereof; which they certainly are, when most delighted in and thought upon. Then how can it be supposed that idolaters can worship the true and living God, any otherwise than in a mere form? With such the several branches of our Christian testimony are no otherwise regarded than for outward decency's sake, to keep up the form in the sight of men. So there is a dead form, and an insipid fruitless bearing of our testimonies, which can never beget to God, tho' perhaps it may sometimes beget into the form. But this brings no increase to the Lord's people, except of pain and distress. Visible disorders and immoral practices in particulars have often wounded us, and hurt the cause of truth; but not in such a dangerous manner; because, where sound judgment and the spirit of wholesome discipline have been preserved, these things have been judged and cast out of the camp. But the greatest wounds we have received have been in the house of our seeming friends, by their endeavours to maintain our principles (or at least what they liked of them) worship, ministry, and discipline, all

Rom. ii.
28, 29.

all in that form only, which the faithful have been, and now are, livingly led into. Antichrist has always made more havock by transforming himself, than by direct violence and opposition.

Let it be ever remembred what *Paul* saith, " For
" he is not a Jew which is one outwardly; neither
" is that circumcision which is outward in the
" flesh: but he is a Jew which is one inwardly;
" and circumcision is that of the heart, in the
" spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not
" of men, but of God." None, I think, dare deny but it would be equally true, if the word *Christian* was substituted in the room of the word *Jew*: if so, the form, appearance, and character may be attained without the heart-work. We read of some who had the form even of godliness, yet denied the power, tho' perhaps not in words; for to me it appears the most emphatical denial of it, to live and act in the form without it; as this may seem by practice, which speaks louder than words, to declare to mankind there is no need of the power, seeing they can do without it. Certain it is, those who inordinately love this world, and the things of it, cannot have the power of godliness whilst in that state; as saith the apostle, " Love
" not the world, neither the things that are in
" the world. If any man love the world, the
" love of the father is not in him."

1 John ii.
25.

I do therefore earnestly intreat all, into whose hands these remarks shall come, seriously to pause, and examine their own hearts without partiality, that they may see, before it be too late, what state they

they are in. If by a narrow and strict scrutiny they should find that the religious structure (which some of them have been many years in building) was not erected by the ordering and direction of Divine Wisdom, it would be much more safe and prudent to have it all pulled down, so as that there may not be one stone left upon another, by laying the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of living and powerful faith towards God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, in a conscience purified by his blood.

These lines are principally intended by way of an alarm and warning to the careless, lukewarm, and formal professors. As for the sincere, upright, humble seekers of and worshippers of God, they will be established upon the rock of ages, which the gates of hell shall not prevail against, and reap the blessed fruits of the painful travail of their souls before God; and in due time, if they faint not, their parched ground will become a pool, and their thirsty lands springs of water: yea, through generations to come, they will enlarge, and become as a fountain of gardens, wells of living water, and streams from *Lebanon*. The beloved of their souls will call, saying, "Awake, O north" Cant. iv. 15, 16.
"wind! and come thou south, blow upon my
"garden, that the spices thereof may flow out."
Then will they say, "Let my beloved come into
"his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits."

CHAPTER IV.

Containing Short Remarks upon the TRUE and
the FALSE MINISTRY.

Joel ii. 28.

THE prophet *Joel*, in a remarkable and excellent manner, sets forth the nature of gospel-ministry. “ And it shall come to pass
“ afterward, I will pour out my spirit upon all
“ flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall
“ prophesy.” What prophesying is here intended is clearly described, *1 Cor. xiv. 3.* “ He that prophesieth, speaketh unto men, to edification, and
“ exhortation, and comfort.” Indeed great part of this chapter is excellently employed in setting forth gospel-ministry, and the Christian liberty all have to exercise a right call thereunto. But let it be observed, the daughters were to be engaged therein, as well as the sons, by gospel law and rule; which was accordingly allowed and practised in the apostolic church. But where the learning and wisdom of man hath been introduced in the place of gospel-ministry, it has directly contrary to Christian liberty, wholly excluded women therefrom. What pride and arrogance must such men have, who exclude all from the ministry but themselves, for filthy lucre’s sake! assuming to themselves the name clergy, calling others laity; a distinction the true church and the holy scriptures are strangers to, which say, *1 Pet. iv. 10, 11.*
“ As every man hath received the gift, even so
“ minister the same one to another, as good stew-

ards

“ards of the manifold grace of God. If any man
“speak, let him speak as the oracles of God: if
“any man minister, let him do it as of the ability
“which God giveth: that God in all things may
“be glorified through Jesus Christ.”

Here is the precious comfortable language of truth indeed, and perfect gospel liberty, which excludes none who have received a gift; that is, who are immediately called of God thereunto, as was *Aaron*. *Exod.* xxviii. *1 Chron.* xxiii. 13. shews at *Heb.* v. 4. large how *Aaron* was called, and, with his posterity, separated by the immediate appointment of God himself. The manner of their qualification, and how they should conduct themselves in the priest's office during that dispensation, are all recorded with that exact clearness and punctuality, always used by the Almighty towards his poor dependent creature man, when he is pleased to enjoin him the observance of any law or ordinance. Therefore no man ought to receive any thing as an ordinance of God, unless it appears indisputably clear that he has commanded it; nor yet receive those men who have engrossed the ministry to themselves, unless they appear to have better authority for their undertaking, than their being taught by human means at schools and colleges.

But, alas! the powers of the earth enable many such to take the fleece, whether they feed the flock or no: Having learned this trade, they appear as anxious how to make the most of it as any others. If any refuse to receive them as the Lord's ambassadors, and conscientiously forbear putting into their

mouths, the usual method has been to call to the magistrate, Help ! help ! and to prepare war against such. But through the breaking forth and arising of the Light of Truth, they have it not in their power to make such drudges of magistrates in general as heretofore. Neither do I think the generality are so much inclined to persecution themselves, especially among Protestants, as in time past; but do really believe many or most of them abhor the severest part of it, and are men of moderate principles. Their greatest unhappiness seems to be that of suffering interest to blind their eyes, and that it is so much for their outward advantage to keep mankind from receiving the true

John i. 9. Light, which enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world, lest their craft should be endangered by the arising thereof. So here the blind lead the blind, which exposes both to the utmost hazard; yet such leaders frequently despise and deride those, who, from the constraining power and love of God, testify against their blindness; to whom the answer of our Lord to the learned Rabbies amongst the Jews may not be unapplicable: “ And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also? Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say we see; therefore your sin remaineth.”

Matth. xiv. 35.

John ix. 40. Where men have suffered themselves to be swayed by interest to embrace a profitable craft whereby they get wealth, they have frequently been found very hot and fierce in supporting the same, endeavouring

vouring to suppress whatever hath risen up against it. Hence the experience of many generations can testify, that after preaching became a gainful trade to get money and worldly honour by, the clergy (so called) have been always the greatest stirrers up of force upon conscience, and persecution, for differing from them in religion; for which they have not the least shadow of example or precept, either from Christ or his apostles. But all that his ministers were allowed to do, with respect to such as would not receive them and their doctrine, was to shake off the dust from their feet, as a testimony against them. These had received the gift of the ministry from Christ; they had it without money and without price, “Freely ye
“ have received, freely give.” But mercenary preachers do not receive their ministry freely; for they alledge, it is attended with great charge to be properly qualified for it; and therefore they must make an interest of it again, or they should be great losers. The plain truth is, they do not receive their ministry from Jesus Christ; neither can they produce any evidence to prove that they have received a commission from him for what they take upon them. Their using the words of Christ and his apostles affords them no authority from him; for the very worst of men, yea the devils themselves, may do the same. Oh! what pity it is they should pretend to be sent of God, ambassadors of Christ, and the apostles successors! when they really are so manifestly unlike him and them; and have evidently the marks of the false prophets and hirelings we read of in the holy scriptures, as hath
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Matth. x. 8.

been fully proved against them by authors of good account.

2 Cor. iii.
5. 6.

Now let us take notice what *Paul* the great apostle of the *Gentiles* saith upon this subject; “Not that we
“are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of
“ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God: who also
“hath made us able ministers of the New Testa-
“ment, not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the
“letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.” This
plainly sheweth, that ministers in the gospel-times
were to convey the quickening Spirit of living and
heavenly virtue to mankind; agreeable to *Matth.*
xxviii. 19. “Go ye therefore and teach all nations,
“baptizing them in (or into) the name of the
“Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy
“Ghost.” Ver. 20. “Lo, I am with you always
“to the end of the world.” That this baptizing-
teaching with the Holy Ghost was that practised
in the primitive church, appears by many passages
in holy writ; particularly *Acts* x. 44. “While
“*Peter* spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on
“all them which heard the word.” Chap. xi.
ver. 15, 16. “And (said *Peter*) as I began to
“speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us
“at the beginning. Then remembered I the word
“of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed
“baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized
“with the Holy Ghost.” And seeing the dispen-
sation of God to man is the very same now as it
was then, mankind as much involved in sin, and
estranged from God as they were then, and the
Lord hath graciously promised to be with his
ministers

ministers always to the end of the world, no good reasons can possibly be given, why the same powerful efficacious means are not now as essentially necessary for man's recovery, as at that time. There can be no ground for a denial of this truth, unless a consciousness in some that they have not the assistance of the Spirit in their ministry; therefore it seems for their interest, and for the maintaining of their credit, to persuade mankind there is no such thing to be attained now. This, with many other instances which might be produced, plainly shews them to be no other than ministers of the letter; and that, we read, only kills, when the quickening Spirit doth not accompany the preaching of it.

Very judicious are the distinctions made by *William Dell* (in his Trial of spirits both in teachers and hearers) between ministers of the letter, and ministers of the Spirit; he being himself a man of literature, and well acquainted with the nature of university education, as he was master of *Gonville* and *Caius* college in *Cambridge*. I shall just make a few quotations from him, and recommend that tract, and his excellent treatise on baptism, &c. to the reader's serious perusal.

“ And first, let me note an objection, *viz.* but
 “ some will object here, If a man preach the
 “ word in the letter, even good, sound, and or-
 “ thodox doctrine, no doubt but such a man is
 “ to be heard, and he may do much good in the
 “ church, tho' he want Christ's Spirit: This
 “ (saith he) I have heard from very many who
 “ have

“ have thought they have said something. But to
 “ this I answer, That they who want Christ’s Spirit,
 “ which is the Spirit of prophecy, tho’ they preach
 “ the exact letter of the word, yet are false pro-
 “ phets, and not to be heard by the sheep.” Again;
 “ They that preach only the outward letter of the
 “ word without the Spirit, make all things out-
 “ ward in the church: whereas in the true king-
 “ dom of Christ all things are inward and spiri-
 “ tual, and all the true religion of Christ is written
 “ in the soul and spirit of man by the Spirit of
 “ God; and the believer is the only book in which
 “ God himself writes his New Testament.” He
 further saith, “ They that preach the outward
 “ letter without the Spirit, can, notwithstanding
 “ that, both live themselves in all the inward evils
 “ of corrupted nature, and allow others to do so
 “ too. Wherefore to conclude (saith he) let us
 “ know that that church that hath the word, if it
 “ wants the Spirit, is antichrist’s church; and that
 “ ministry that useth the word, and wants the
 “ Spirit, is antichrist’s ministry; and that all works,
 “ duties, prayings, preachings, fastings, thank-
 “ givings, &c. without Christ’s Spirit, are nothing
 “ but the very kingdom of antichrist, and the abo-
 “ mination of *desolation*.” Thus far *Dell*.—Oh! of
 what importance it is for mankind, of every de-
 nomination as to religion (ours as well as others)
 deeply to ponder these weighty observations in
 their hearts, especially the last. Upon that of
Paul, Rom. x. 15. How shall they preach, except
they be sent? *Dell* farther observes thus, viz. “ So
 2 “ that

“ that true preaching comes from true sending,
“ and this comes from the grace of God.” Not,
say I, from the sending of universities, bishops,
presbyters, or any other man or set of men what-
ever, or from man’s intruding himself thereinto
in his own will without a proper call; but from
the constraining power of the everlasting word of
God laying a necessity, as expressed by *Paul*, 1 *Cor.*
ix. 16. “ For tho’ I preach the gospel, I have
“ nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon
“ me, yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the
“ gospel.”

It is of the utmost consequence, towards pro-
moting truth and righteousness upon the earth,
that the ministry be preserved according to its ori-
ginal institution, *viz.* under the immediate direc-
tion of the Eternal Word of God, speaking as the
oracles of God. It is properly God’s speaking by
his instruments to the children of men, such things
as he the searcher of hearts knows they stand in
need of; at the same time opening the hearts of
them to whom it belongs to receive the doctrine.
Nothing but the unparalleled love and power of
Christ can bring forth and support such a ministry.
It is in the nature of things impossible that those,
so exercised therein, can have sinister views of
making temporal advantage to themselves thereby.
Wherever that appears, we may be assured the
Lord hath not sent them; and therefore they can-
not profit the people at all.

Man should be so far from proceeding upon cor-
rupt motives, for outward gain or advantage, in this

important work, that even tho' good will to mankind, flowing from the love of God shed abroad in the heart, in which strong desires may arise to do good, free from lucrative views of all kinds, and much beautiful gospel-doctrine also may open very suitable, as the party may think, for the help and edification of his or her fellow-mortals, yet all this is not sufficient to proceed upon, without the call and real gift in this so awful an undertaking; it being no more at the best than the natural consequence of the operation of that pure love in the saints minds, even in such as never had a call to the ministry: yet to some these blessed operations, influences, and openings, may be given, in order to prepare them for that work which they should wait patiently under, until the full time comes: this will be clearly seen, as the eye is single. But there is great cause to believe some have launched out upon this foundation only, in the beginning of their publick appearances, whereby they have in a sorrowful manner brought darkness upon themselves, and sometimes on others; having proved only ministers of the letter, tho' perhaps pretending much to have the impulses of the Spirit. These have been instruments of much anxiety and distress to the true church, who can savour nothing with delight, but that which comes from the power of the word of life.

It may be difficult to bring true judgment over such, in the present low state of things; especially when there has been a fair outside, and nothing to blame in their morals. But it sometimes hath fallen

out,

out, that there has been something permitted to manifest the unsoundness of such, and thereby to relieve the painful sufferers under the blasting wind of such ministry.

Inconsiderate weak persons have intruded themselves into this great work; who not duly waiting for judgment to try the spirits, and what presents to their minds, have been beguiled by transformations to go out in a false heat; and for want of the holy dread and fear upon their hearts, they have caught hold of the gospel liberty again restored, (which must be preserved open, lest the Holy Spirit be quenched) viz. that all who are called to the work of the ministry, whether male or female, may prophesy or preach one by one, that all may be edified. 1 Cor. xiv. 31.

It has been a painful suffering case to living members in some places, when they have seen that both the matter and manner of some could have no other tendency than to expose themselves, and burden the religious society, who suffered such to assume an office for which they were no ways qualified. Certainly the church hath power to order and regulate her own members; and doubtless she may wholly refuse and reject a ministry, which, upon trial, she has in truth no unity with; and even substantial members in their private capacity, who have stood their ground well, and have large experience of the Lord's dealings, whether ministers or others, ought, in reason and the nature of things, to have great weight with such who have not yet made full proof of their ministry, nor given satisfaction to their friends in general, as well as to themselves, and

perhaps a few others of little judgment. Neither ought any to go abroad to exercise their ministry, until they know there is a general satisfaction at home therewith; not even to adjacent meetings. Some such have been very positive and resolute, hard to be convinced of their mistakes, and censorious upon those of deeper experience, but too much like that sign of great depravity set forth by *Isa. iii. 5.* "The child shall behave himself proudly against the antient, and the base against the honourable."

Great order and decency is to be preserved in the church of God, especially among the leading members, as way-marks to all. The reason and nature of the thing demands a proper regard and preference to age, gifts, growth, and experience; which will be always strictly observed and paid by those of right spirits. When it is otherwise, it is a sure token of a false birth, and that pernicious self is not slain. Where that predominates, it cannot fail of mixing with their religious services.

That the hearers have a right to judge, appears from *1 Cor. xiv. 29.* "Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge." Therefore it is very presuming for any to take upon them the sole right of speaking and judging too; or to impose that upon an auditory or church, which they are not edified with, nor believe to proceed from the right spring; for the word preached doth not profit, unless it be mixed with faith in those that hear it.

I know

I know no way to evade the force and weight of what is above observed, unless it be supposed the auditory in general are so void of spiritual understanding, as not to be capable of judging; which would discover great uncharitableness, and favour too much of arrogance. I am fully persuaded, if ministry doth not reach the Divine Witness in the hearts of the hearers, and cause them to assent thereunto in some measure, it will never profit them. The right ministers have a witness to the truth of their ministry in the minds of even the rebellious; how much more so then in those of the honest-hearted?

The danger which there is reason to apprehend from the low, languid, unskilful state of many in our society, hath induced me (and feeling my mind in degree warmed thereunto) to write the more closely concerning the nature and pernicious consequence of a false ministry; being fully persuaded, that the more formal and superficial we as a people become, the more abundant danger there is of such a ministry rising, and finding encouragement to grow and prevail; for the lifeless, formal professors had rather have almost any kind of ministry than all silence. And on the other hand, a right ministry cannot have a free course, nor be exalted, where there is nothing but worldly spirits, clothed with a form of religion. But true ministers must be like the holy prophet *Ezekiel*:
 “ And I will make thy tongue cleave to the roof Chap. iii.
 “ of thy mouth, that thou shalt be dumb, and ver. 26.
 “ shalt not be to them a reprover; for they are
 “ a re-

Amos v. 13. "a rebellious house." And, "The prudent shall keep silence in that time."

Having made some remarks upon the false, as well as the forward and unskilful ministry, which, tho' plain and close, I hope will administer no hurt or discouragement to any truly concerned in this important work, they may (if duly observed) be lessons of caution and instruction to those for whom they are intended; and I hope also a strength to the painfully exercised under the causes of uneasiness given by unskilful intruders into the work, whether through weakness or wilfulness, that they may not be slack in their endeavours to regulate the same by plain-dealing, yet with true judgment, love, and tenderness; all justly applied where they severally belong. Their task may sometimes be heavy and discouraging, as it is hard to turn those who have taken a wrong course, and imagine themselves right, when it is really otherwise; for those have been observed to be the most positive of any of their pretended sight and sense, yet let the weight of the sense of truth, which is strongest of all, be laid upon them from time to time, that the church may not suffer hurt and loss by the omission of its sensible members; which cannot fail of weakening and hindering the growth of such members also in an individual capacity. I know it must be those alive in the truth, of good understanding and judgment therein (and no other) that are qualified to help and direct those who have missed their way in a religious sense; agreeable to *Gal. vi. 1.* "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which

“ which are spiritual restore such an one in the
“ spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou
“ also be tempted;” and not the captious, critical,
worldly-wise; for they have nothing to do to act
in the church of Christ, until they are first sub-
jected to and taught of the Lord themselves.

The main point, in my apprehension, is to be
able to form a true judgment of the source or
spring from whence ministry proceeds; and if
found to be right in the ground, a great deal of
tenderness is to be used, and much childish weak-
ness is to be patiently borne with. For altho’
some through fear, and a deep sense of the weight
of so important an undertaking, may (at first)
speak very stammeringly, and with considerable
perturbation, yet the sweet efficacy of the quick-
ening powerful Spirit, which is felt with them in
their service (by those who are circumcised in heart
and ear) far exceeds the finest eloquence without
it. Such should be prudently encouraged, yet
suffered to feel their own feet. There are but few
children, however hopeful, that can bear much
nursing and applause. Oh! the great hurt which
hath been done by the forward affectionate part in
some, labouring to bring forth divers before the
right time, and by pushing on others too fast, who
in their beginning were lively and very hopeful,
to their great hurt and loss. Oh! then, what cau-
tion and care should be exercised, clearly to see in
the true light what to lay hold of, and what to dis-
courage in this important respect.

I now

I now intend to conclude this head with some plain honest hints, which have arisen from mine own experience and observation concerning the true ministry, as it hath been restored again through divine mercy for about this last hundred years, in greater simplicity and purity than has been known (as I apprehend) since the apostles days. This hath not been conducted with the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in such a demonstration of the Spirit and Power of God, as hath (tho' much despised by the learned Rabbies) been a great blessing to this and other nations; many thousands having been thereby turned to Christ their true and saving teacher, whom they embraced joyfully, as the alone beloved of their souls. A great number of churches were gathered to sit down as under the shadow of the wings of the prince of Peace. Great was the Lord their God in the midst of them; their ministers were clothed with salvation, and their feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Many then ran to and fro, and the true knowledge of God was increased. The Lord gave the word, and many, both male and female, were the publishers of it. And through divine mercy it may yet be said (tho' the declension in practice is great in many) that there is a considerable body preserved, to bear the ark of the testimony of the Lord their God as upon their shoulders, in the sight of the people, with their feet as in the bottom of *Jordan*; and a living powerful ministry is yet continued, tho' far short of the number formerly engaged in that work.

For

For many have grown up amongst us, who became more superficial and easy about possessing the substance of religion than their ancestors were. Such have relied too much on the ministry, and have not profited in religion thereby. But they have greatly declined in practice, under abundant favours of this kind, the ministry becoming to many as a pleasant song. They hear the words with pleasure, but do them not; their heart going still after their covetousness of one kind or another. Therefore the Lord hath seen meet to strip the society very much in that respect; and also to engage many of those who are true ministers, frequently to lead the people, by example, into silence. O! blessed will all those servants be, who are preserved, discerningly and with true judgment, to administer proper food, and that in due season, whether in silence or words, doing or suffering with and for Christ! Which doubtless all will, who look with a single eye to God's honour above all things attending upon the gift received, which in its operations and requirings is self-evident. None that wait aright upon God will ever be confounded; that belongs to *Babylon*; but peace and infallible certainty is known through all the borders of *Sion*. Every one who knows *Jerusalem* a quiet habitation, is at no loss to understand his proper allotment of service therein, unless he falls into the conferring with flesh and blood; then he comes to the confusion and uncertainty, whereir he may fret and toil in vain. But in the holy awful still waiting upon God in a sanctified heart,

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which is the temple wherein Christ dwells, and our house of prayer, there Satan can never come to deceive us, or to endanger our safety.

CHAPTER V.

Containing Brief Observations upon the NATURE and USEFULNESS of CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINE.

ON every glory there shall be a defence—— That God intended to establish an excellent government, order, and discipline in the church, under the gospel dispensation, appears from divers passages of the prophets in the Old Testament, who saw into and wonderfully described the Christian state; a few of which I shall instance. *Isa.* xxxii. 1. “ Behold a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment.” Chap. xxxiii. 5, 6. “ The Lord is exalted: for he dwelleth on high, he hath filled *Zion* with judgment and righteousness; and wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation.” Chap. xxviii. 5, 6. “ In that day shall the Lord of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty unto the residue of his people: and for a spirit of judgment to him that sitteth in judgment, and for strength to them that turn the battle to the gate.” Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, *Matth.* xviii. 15, 16, 17, 18. clearly directs his followers how to proceed in the exercise of discipline and good order, both with respect to individuals, and to the church; he assured them, that

whatsoever

whatsoever of this kind is done *under divine direction* upon earth, shall be ratified and confirmed in heaven. Chap. xix. 28. he promises such who have followed him in the regeneration, that they shall be exalted in his kingdom, sitting upon thrones to judge and govern his people. We find among the eminent gifts of the Spirit, *Paul reckons helps in government*, 1 Cor. xii. 28. In chap. the 5th, he blames that church very highly for their neglect of practising sound judgment in the way of discipline, shewing them the necessity of putting those guilty of corrupt practices out of the community, lest as a leaven they should affect the whole lump. Vers. 11. he points out how unsafe it was for the Lord's people to have any society with the workers of iniquity. Vers. 12. and 13. that it is the church's duty to judge those that are within, *viz.* her own members, leaving the judging of those that are without to God. In chap. the 6th, he blames them as sharply for going to law one with another before the unjust, shewing that it would have been better they had suffered themselves to have been defrauded, and that every matter of difference or controversy should be judged and determined by the church, in regard to its own members.

A religious society, gathered by God's power, who have received diversities of gifts and qualifications, are considered as a body properly tempered by their holy head (who is perfect in wisdom) that it may well exist by pure laws, rules, and comely orders, both within and without; for the maintaining whereof every member hath its pro-

per office and station wherein it is to act, yet *only by the guidance of the Holy Head*, who is known ever to preside over his humble dependent people, a present help in the needful time, supplying all their wants, as they wait his time.

Pertinent to this is *Eph. iv. 15, 16*. "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love."

The apostle, in *1 Cor. xii.* with great strength of reason and perspicuity, sheweth the diversities of gifts, differences of administrations and operations, all by the same Spirit, who worketh in all as he will; that notwithstanding this variety, all, and of all sorts, are baptized into one body, and made to drink into one Spirit; he says, *vers. 14*, "For the body is not one member, but many;" and sheweth they are all useful to and dependent upon one another, therefore none have a right to apprehend such a self-sufficiency, as to be independent of other members; nay, that those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are useful. The near union, harmony, and sympathy of this glorious body, is set forth in *verse 26*. "And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it."

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For brevity's sake, I forbear at present making more quotations on this subject. These are sufficient to demonstrate fully the strong obligation all baptized members are under, rightly to understand their places in the body, and to come up in a faithful discharge of their duty therein, as in the sight of God, to whom they must be accountable. And it likewise appears that every member, entered as such by his or her voluntary consent, is strictly bound to keep and maintain the established rules of that body; the breach of which not only renders him or her guilty in God's sight, but also accountable to the body. It also behoves this body, immediately upon the transgression of its rules and orders, to exert itself in dealing with transgressors, and to administer sound judgment, in order to restore them; or, on failure of success in that, to disown or refuse to have unity with such, and to let the world know they are not of their body; that the reputation thereof may be preserved amongst those which are without, as well as for its own peace and safety within; seeing by a neglect hereof, others may be infected by the corrupt member, and his evil may spread in the body like a leprosy; but that which is the most affecting, the Lord may be provoked to withdraw from that body which neglects the exercise of true judgment against evil; as in the case of *Achan*, *Joshua vii.* and also that of the tribe of *Benjamin*, *Judges xix.* and *xx.*

It is too obvious to be denied, that the professors of Christianity, by losing the power and
life

life of religion, lost the true spirit of discipline and good order in their churches. Instead of which, they have substituted rules, orders, and canons, &c. of their own invention, principally calculated to support that power by which the clergy (so called) got their wealth, and by which they have procured them to be enforced where they judged necessary by human law. The present state of church government appears to be truly deplorable, amongst most of the divided parts of Christian professors that I know of; consequently they are in a very corrupted state, greatly lacking that judgment and righteousness which was to fill *Sion*, and the wisdom and knowledge which was predicted would be the stability of her times.

Cave and *King*, in their Primitive Christianity, clearly shew, from the writings of many of the antients, particularly for the first three hundred years after Christ, that much care and zeal were maintained to preserve the church clean and pure by a wholesome discipline.

King shews, that not only the teachers, but the whole church were concerned and active in dealing with, receiving satisfaction from, or finally censuring people in common; and also that no teachers were set over them, but only such as the whole church unanimously agreed to receive; and that the common people, generally called laity, were equally concerned with others in deposing and censuring ministers, when they ceased to have unity with them, page 22 to 25, and page 112, 116. He and *Cave*, from *Tertullian*, both shew, that the

the manner of the primitives in giving judgment on such accounts was very weighty and solemn. "As amongst those that are sure that God beholds what they do (says *Tertullian*) this is one of the highest preludiums and forerunners of the judgment to come, when the delinquent is banished from the communion," &c. p. 120.

Athenagoras told the emperors, that no Christian could be a bad man, unless he was an hypocrite; and *Tertullian* openly declares, that when men depart from the discipline of the gospel, they so far cease amongst us to be accounted Christians. *Cave*, page 95.

When at any time invited to publick solemnities, as marriages and the like, the prudence of the church thought fit to lay restraints upon them, and to forbid them light and ludicrous actions, as leaping and dancing; but that they should dine and sup gravely and modestly, as becomes Christians; for which he quotes a council of *Laodicea*, 2d part, p. 73.

They took notice of all offences against the Christian law, any vice or immorality that was either publick in itself, or made known and made good to the church. For (says *Cave*) the holy and good Christians of those times were infinitely careful to keep the honour of their religion unspotted, to stifle every sin in its birth, and by bringing offenders to publick shame and penalty, to keep them from propagating the malignant influence of a bad example. For this reason they watched over one another, told them privately of their

their faults and failures, and when that would not do, brought them before the cognizance of the church. It is needless (says he) to reckon up particular crimes, when none were spared. *Cave*, 3d part, p. 406. Agreeable to the nature and constitution of the church, which as it transacts only in spiritual matters, so it could inflict no other than spiritual censures and chastisements, p. 408. The common and standing penalty they made use of was excommunication, or suspension from communion with the church; the cutting off and casting out an offending person, an infected member, till by repentance and wholesome discipline he was cured and restored; and then he was re-admitted into church society, p. 410.

Cave relates, upon the authority of *Julius Cæsar*, that this manner of discipline was commonly practised amongst the antient Druids, who, when any of the people became irregular and disorderly, they presently suspended them from their sacrifices; and those thus suspended were accounted in the number of the most impious and execrable persons: all men stood off from them, shunned their company and converse as an infection and plague, p. 411.

Penitents, before they were received into unity, made open confession of their faults; this being accounted the very spring of repentance, and without which they concluded it could not be real. "Out of confession (says *Tertullian*) is born repentance, and by repentance God is pacified;" and therefore without this neither riches nor honour would procure any admission into the church:

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a remarkable instance whereof was in the emperor *Theodosius* the Great, who, for his bloody and barbarous slaughter of the *Thessalonians*, was by *Ambrose* bishop of *Milan* suspended, brought to publick confession, and forced to undergo a severe course of penance for eight months together; at length, after he had passed through abundance of sorrow, with tears and great lamentation for his sin, he was admitted into fellowship again, p. 418, 419. So wisely (says *Cave*) did the prudence and piety of those times deal with offenders, neither letting the reins so loose, as to patronize presumption, or encourage any to sin; nor yet holding them so strait, as to drive men into despair, p. 429.

Very forward and active have professors been, and still are, in heaping up offerings, by performing what they call religious duties, whilst practical virtue has been shamefully neglected. Multitudes professing faith in Christ, and accounted members of his church, are suffered to remain without controul or rebuke in various sins and pollutions, to the great scandal of the Christian name; so that it may be said iniquity runs down amongst them like a mighty stream or torrent, carrying all in a manner before it. What painful apprehensions must fill the minds of thoughtful parents respecting their offspring, when, morally speaking, no other can be expected than that they will be carried away thereby to everlasting destruction! Oh! that it were rightly considered by all Christian professors, that obedience is better than sacrifices or offerings, and to hearken unto the voice of God,

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in putting away the evil of their doings from before his eyes, is better than the fat of rams. To what purpose is the multitude of their sacrifices or offerings, whilst the most weighty matters of the law of God are neglected? *viz.* judgment, mercy, and faith; even that faith which is productive of good works. Let them carefully ponder in their hearts what the Lord by his prophet hath declared, *Amos* v. 21, 22, 23, 24. "I hate, I despise your
 " feast-days, and I will not smell in your solemn
 " assemblies. Tho' ye offer me burnt-offerings,
 " and your meat-offerings, I will not accept them:
 " neither will I regard the peace-offerings of your
 " fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise
 " of thy songs, for I will not hear the melody of
 " thy viols. But let judgment run down as waters,
 " and righteousness as a mighty stream." Man is apt to begin at the wrong end, or where he should finish; presuming to perform worship and service to his Maker before he is in a fit condition to be accepted; as a Being of infinite purity will not so much as look towards him in that sense, whilst he hath any fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, either in himself or others. For the Lord will be sanctified in all them that come nigh him. He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity with any assent or approbation. The contrary of which would be implied, if man was suffered to present his offerings whilst in a defiled state. The same that I have here said concerning the acceptance or non-acceptance of individuals, is true, and will hold good, in regard to churches,

churches, and countries or nations. Oh, then! how greatly it behoves all who would stand approved in God's sight, to exert their utmost care and diligence in judging, condemning, and suppressing evil of all kinds, first in themselves, and then in every branch of the community, as far as lies in their power.

I shall now proceed to shew, that when the Lord was pleased to restore Christianity in its primitive purity and power, which was in the last century, church-government, good order, and wholesome discipline was also restored amongst an humble, self-denying people, who were, as God's people in all ages have been, much despised, reviled, and persecuted. Yet, through all the heathenish rage of their adversaries, the rising up of the rulers of the earth against them, and the people imagining vain things concerning them, their bands were not broken, nor their cords cast away. They saw holiness was the Lord's delight, and promoted it with all diligence amongst mankind in general, but more especially amongst themselves. The Lord, who at first raised chosen instruments, and sent them forth into the world, which was as a briary thorny wilderness, wonderfully blessed their ardent labours with increase, so that in a few years a large number of churches were planted (even amidst all the rage and fury before-mentioned) and quietly settled and established under the teachings of his Spirit in their hearts. Hereby they grew up in wisdom and stature, and in process of time clearly saw, in the Divine Light, that they must form themselves into

an orderly body, to be governed under such regulations as would put them in the best capacity, as a religious society, of glorifying God, and being the most useful to one another, as members of the same body; and that also, by being embodied and disciplined as an army with banners, they might make a firm stand against every appearance of evil, with their united strength, under the Captain of their salvation.

Divine wisdom was wonderfully with those worthies first sent and engaged in this blessed work, directing their steps with true judgment, as well as opening the minds of a numerous people, of various growths, to receive the manner and form of government and order, which those of the clearest sight discovered, in the Light of Truth, to be best adapted to promote the glory of God, and the preservation of his church and people. Yet there were some opposers (as in the primitive times) even of their own body or society; men of perverse spirits, who troubled the church for a time with litigious jangling, and corrupt disputations. But the Lord, who knows how to put a stop to the rage and cunning devices of the enemies of his church, brought a blast upon them, which hath exposed the names of the leaders, and will continue to expose them through ages and generations to come. Thus the faithful were enabled to carry on this great work, designed for the defence and preservation of God's people, in defiance of all those *Sanballats, Tobiahs, and Geshems*, which were permitted to rise up against them and their godly undertaking.

Great wisdom may be discerned by those eyes only which the Lord hath opened, in his thus ranking and placing his people, that they might stand in such a situation as to be really true help-mates in Christ Jesus our Lord and holy head; the strong bearing and helping the infirmities of the weak, supporting one another in that which is good, judging down all of a contrary nature to it, in every rank and station; none daring to be above admonition, but rather esteeming it a mark of love and sincere regard, that others extend care over them; agreeable to 1 *Thess.* v. 12, 13, 14. “ And we
“ beseech you, brethren, to know them which
“ labour among you, and are over you in the Lord,
“ and admonish you; and to esteem them very
“ highly in love for their work’s sake: and be at
“ peace among yourselves. Now we exhort you,
“ brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort
“ the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.”

What an inexpressible favour it is to be even one of the least members of this body, or branch of the heavenly Father’s family, where so great help and edification may be received from those of greater growth and maturity than themselves. On the other hand, what high satisfaction it affords the fathers and mothers in *Israel*, to see the children and weaklings of the flock of teachable dispositions, and carefully endeavouring to walk according to the truth. Some are made of God as saviours upon mount *Sion*, and as watchmen upon her walls, anointed and appointed by the Holy Ghost, to watch over the flock of Christ,

as those that must give an account, whose excellent services may justly entitle them to the application of that copious elegant language, wherewith *Job* sets forth what he had done in the time of his prosperity, *Job* xxix. 13, 14, 15, 16. “ The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me; and I caused the widow’s heart to sing for joy. I put on righteousness, and it clothed me: my judgment was as a robe and a diadem. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor: and the cause which I knew not I searched out.”

Elders ruling thus in the church are indeed worthy of double honour, whether they labour in the word and doctrine or not; being such as, agreeable to *Peter’s* advice, 1 *Pet.* v. 2, 3, 4. “ Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.”

It is of the utmost consequence, that the members, who constitute the church of Christ, be thoroughly acquainted with the true spring of motion and action therein, lest any should presumptuously conceive or imagine, that seeing church government carries much the appearance of outward oeconomy and civil proceedings, human abilities, natural and acquired, are sufficient to manage the same. If any fall into such a dangerous error, it must be
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for want of duly considering the nature of the work to be engaged in; it being no other than what appertains to the spiritual kingdom of Christ, and the promotion thereof on earth: which kingdom man Matt. iii. 3. by nature cannot see nor understand. And it is written, "the world by wisdom knew not God." 1 Cor. i. 21. Therefore they cannot know his kingdom, nor how to act properly therein, under the Supreme Head, whom they know not.

To be capable of acting rightly in the discipline of the church, man must be born of the Spirit, or from above, and receive a qualification from the Holy Ghost for that work. Such are the only qualified persons for maintaining good order in the churches, whether young, old, or middle-aged, male or female, and should be regarded as those who are set over others in the Lord. These are seen and esteemed highly in love for their work's sake, by the discerning in the church, tho' they may be of a low degree; yet, being alive in the truth, they can favour the things that be of God, conveyed to them through these favoured instruments; and also reject the things which be of men, when intruded into God's work; because the innocent life raised up in them is burthened and grieved therewith.

Nothing can more afflict the souls of such, than the darkening counsel by a multitude of words without knowledge. We may see none were properly qualified to judge and govern outward *Israel*, unless gifted of God for that purpose. We find they were to have God for their king; and those whom he raised up

up by his immediate power, to be their judges under him, (herein a perfect pattern of the christian church) until they impiously rejected a government, than which none could be attended with more ease, security, and comfort, that they might be like other nations, that is, to be more left to their own power and policy, and to be less dependent upon God. Whilst they looked to the Lord for judgment, aid, and protection, see how wonderfully he provided for them, *Moses, Aaron, and Miriam in Egypt, through the Red Sea, and in the wilderness.* To the help of whom the Lord also raised a large number of inferior judges, upon whom he put his Spirit, as an essential qualification.

Numb. xi.
25, 26.

It would be needless to be very particular, in shewing how the Lord was pleased to raise many, and to put his Spirit upon them, under the blessed influence and strength whereof they wrought wonders for the reformation, deliverance, and protection of his people: as *Joshua, Othniel, Deborah, and Barak, Gideon, Jephthah, Samuel, David, Solomon, Nehemiah, &c.* and when the people perceived the Spirit of God was upon them, they joined such with alacrity in God's work, out of faithful subjection to that of God in and upon them, and not to them as men.

Very remarkable is the humility and honest upright petition of *Solomon*, which doth amply discover the state of mind such must be brought into, who are favoured with suitable ability to judge and govern in the church of Christ. “ In *Gibeon* the

1 Kings iii.
5, 7, 9.

“ Lord appeared to *Solomon* in a dream by night :
“ and

“ and God said, Ask what I shall give thee. He
 “ said, O Lord my God, thou hast made thy
 “ servant king instead of *David* my father : and
 “ I am but a little child ; I know not how to go
 “ out or come in. Give therefore thy servant an
 “ understanding heart to judge thy people, that I
 “ may discern between good and bad : for who is
 “ able to judge this thy so great a people ?”

Pertinent hereunto is the ardent concern raised in *Nehemiah's* mind for the welfare of God's people and city ; the deep anguish of his soul (though in the midst of worldly affluence) ; his earnest and humble prayer to God ; the manner of addressing king *Artaxerxes* upon that mournful occasion concerning the desolate state of *Jerusalem*, and his whole proceeding in that godly undertaking of raising the walls of that city, &c. Much might be wrote to shew the great analogy hereof with the maintaining of the hedge, or wall of discipline and good order in the Christian church, as a defence from dangerous enemies ; but I hope, as the Light of Truth has mercifully arisen, and people's minds are considerably illuminated thereby, there is not so much necessity (especially amongst us) to convince them in general what is truth in these respects, as to remind them of their duty, that practice may keep pace with knowledge ; for which end short hints may in a good degree answer.

I might also draw much more from the precious doctrine and experience of God's people, recorded in holy writ, concurring to establish the truth of what I have advanced concerning the outward

order, government, and beautiful discipline of the church, which is the kingdom of Christ, wherein the sanctified of God are as subordinate kings and priests; which is thus expressed, *Dan. vii. 21, 22.* "I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints," (*viz.* the power of antichrist in the form of a church, with orders and rules) "and prevailed against them, until the Antient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the Most High, and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom." *Paul* calls this dominion the saints are to possess, *Eph. iii. 10.* "Principalities and powers in heavenly places." Oh! long hath this wicked horn had the rule and government where the saints should! so that there hath been little or nothing of the nature of that excellent government which is found in the kingdom of Christ. There hath been no true vision from the prophets, the law hath perished from the priests, and counsel from the antients, *Ezek. vii. 26.* and the glorious kingdom of the Messiah has for many ages been as it were banished from the earth, or at least hid from mankind in general, as in a wilderness, whereinto the true church fled, *Rev. xii. 6.* But the Lord hath been pleased in a good degree to restore again the excellent order of his house amongst a despised people; concerning whom I shall now endeavour to give some account, by way of short hints, of what mine eyes have seen, mine ears heard, what I have tasted and handled of the good word of life in their assemblies; more particularly as I am now upon that

that subject, those, according to their degrees of subordination (as the wisdom from above hath placed them) called meetings for discipline, or church order and government: which meetings I have attended with diligence, as I thought it my indispensable duty, for about thirty years of my time: near the first ten whereof I was for the most part an highly pleased and comforted spectator of the sweet harmony and comely order of God's house, the love, sympathy, and care extended in each branch thereof one towards another; in silent seeking the assistance of the Holy Head, that the body might edify itself in love, and the King of saints be known to rule all that was within us. For when we become members of Christ's body, we cease to consider ourselves as individuals only, but also as members deeply interested in the welfare of the body. Here is an united labour and travail, being all in one common interest.

I have often beheld the awful Majesty of the Divine Power amongst these people, and could say in humble admiration, at least in my heart, "Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of *Sion*, for *Isa. xii 6*
"great is the Holy One of *Israel*, in the midst of
"thee!" There has been no lack of any good thing in the camp of God. The glorious Lord hath been indeed as places of broad rivers and streams, where can no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby. For the Lord was our judge, the Lord was our law-giver, the Lord was our king, *Isa. xxxiii. 21, 22.* and therefore all the splendid art and invention of man in re-

ligion, was, to be wholly laid aside, as *Saul's* armour was by *David*, being concerned to go as he did, in the name (*viz.* the power and dread) of the Most High. When I did thus stand still, looking upon *Sion*, viewing her beauty and excellency, I have seen great things done by mean instruments going forth against their enemies in the name of the Lord only; which hath caused my soul to be knit unto them, and I loved them as mine own soul. This sight and sense of things made me exceeding awful in my mind, afraid to speak and act, unless I found a well-grounded assurance that the Lord required it of me; by feeling the weight of his divine power upon my spirit, opening my understanding, and guiding my judgment, that I might clearly know what, when, and how to speak in the awful presence of God, and before the princes of his people, whose words, I observed, were as goads, and as nails fastened by the master of our assemblies, which are given from one shepherd.

Very pertinent to what I am now upon is *Eccles.* v. 1, 2, 3. and what indeed ought to take deep impression on all those concerned, *viz.* “Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou art upon earth, therefore let thy words be few. For a dream cometh through a multitude of business, and a fool’s voice is known by multitude

"titude of words." It is plain from what is before noted, and much more in holy writ, that all the power and wisdom of man, till it be subjected, sanctified, and properly influenced by a supernatural principle, is wholly excluded from and shut out of the church of God. Although those abilities are adequate to, and sufficient for, the things of a man. viz. the concerns of this life; (for, as saith our Lord, the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light) yet the things of God no man can know, consequently cannot rightly act in them, but by his Spirit. This also in part appears from what *Elibu* saith, *Job xxxii.* 7, 8, 9. "I said, Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom. But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding. Great men are not always wise: neither do the aged understand judgment."

Very great hath been, and still is, the loss of man, for want of deeply understanding this important point. Giving a latitude to human abilities in religion, and the concerns thereof, hath opened the door wide for antichrist to become almost an universal monarch. It is that by which he hath got great footing amongst all the divisions of Christian professors; ours in a sorrowful manner with respect to individuals, as well as others; yet a living body are preserved. These, through the divine blessing, prevent his taking possession of the church, as he has done of others. The eyes and cry of these are to the Lord, whom they know to be their sufficiency;

ficiency; and that unless he ordain salvation as walls and bulwarks to keep our city, in vain are all human endeavours.

When I have considered the low, indifferent, languid state of those under our name in many places, both in this and other nations, chiefly occasioned by an inordinate love of the world, and the things thereof, my soul hath been deeply humbled in awful prostration before him; when I have beheld his wonderful condescension, in still shining forth upon us, as from between the cherubims of his glory, waiting to be gracious, by turning again the captivity of many of his *Israel*, and seeking to rebuild her waste places, and thereby to revive her antient beauty. He is pleased to continue unto us some judges as at the first, and counsellors as at the beginning, *tho' but few in number* when compared to the bulk. May the Great Lord of the harvest raise many more faithful labourers, and send them into his harvest, even such as are described by the evangelical prophet *Isaiab*! “The sinners in *Sion* are afraid, fearfulness hath surprized the hypocrites: “who among us shall dwell with the devouring “fire? who amongst us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? He that walketh righteously, and “speaketh uprightly, he that despiseth the gain “of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from “holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from “hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from “seeing evil: he shall dwell on high: his place “of defence shall be the munitions of rocks, bread “shall be given him, his waters shall be sure.”

Oh!

Chap. xxxiii
14, 15, 16,
17.

Oh! how sorrowful it is, in this and other nations, for the Lord's messengers to view the great prevalence of unfaithfulness in large numbers, in most branches of our Christian testimony! much whereof hath been greatly owing to the laxness of discipline. Those who should have been, above all other considerations, waiting for fresh and renewed ability from God to build his house, have been most of all endeavouring to build themselves and posterity uncertain houses in earthly inheritances; living at ease in their cieled houses, whilst the ark of the testimony of God hath been exposed.

Dreadful will the account be such will have to render, who have hid their Lord's money in the earth, having wrapped it in a napkin, *viz.* a decent form of religion. The Lord hath opened eyes that see them through their fig-leaf covering in most or all the ranks of his people; though it is much to be feared they have closed their own eyes, except towards the world. In *that* they may be clear sighted, it being their kingdom. Some of these may presume from their long profession, wherein perhaps they have taken care (as far as appears to man's eye) to preserve a reputation free from spots or blemishes; and they also having a pretty large stock of wealth, in the getting whereof they may have not only dried up the tenderness of religion in themselves, but also have laid a foundation for the ruin of their children, or those that succeed them in their possessions; notwithstanding which, some such may take upon them to be active members in the meetings where they belong.

belong. Very lamentable indeed are the states of meetings, managed by such un sanctified spirits. The king of *Sion* is banished from their councils; and the precious sons and daughters thereof are but as suffering witnesses for God, clothed as in sackcloth; and the seed of God, which should have dominion in all our meetings, is depressed. I sincerely wish there were no cause for these close remarks; a caution of this kind may be necessary. This spirit getting in amongst us, in any part of the body or society, cannot fail of laying waste; therefore let all consider what spirit rules in them. Where such a spirit prevails, it is not the wise woman building the house, but the foolish woman pulling it down with her own hand.

It is a mournful truth, that among the many thousands of *Israel*, there are but few, in comparison, who really stand quite upright, as pillars in God's house; who cannot be at all warped by fear, interest, favour, or affection, but look beyond all singly at truth and righteousness. Oh! what mean cringing, stooping, and temporizing, is to be found in some! It is my son, daughter, near relation, or friend, that I am loth to offend, lest I should suffer in my interest or reputation, or shall gain his or her ill will. This spirit will never dwell on high, but must have its portion amongst the fearful and the unbelieving; and unless such repent, they will be ranked with those that deny Christ before men. They may read their portion, *Luke xii. 9*. True zeal and sound judgment is often rejected by this sort, whether it comes from individuals,

individuals, or meetings; nay even by some, when it is the mature result of the largest body under the direction of the best wisdom, if they do not find it agree with their unsanctified understandings; which would be strange if it should, as it comes from the spirit of Truth.

It may be further observed, that those whose principal view is only maintaining the form or outward character in religion, feel very little or no pain on account of the disorderly practices of their fellow-members, and therefore they can easily daub with untempered mortar, and smooth all over, crying peace, before judgment has laid hold of the transgressing part; and all this done under the specious pretence of charity and Christian tenderness. Yet when any in godly zeal are constrained to shew the pernicious consequence of healing the wounds of the daughter of *Sion* deceitfully, some such soon discover they are too much strangers to true charity, by their opposition to sound judgment, and those exercised therein, that the wounds might be searched to the bottom. Here something of a persecuting spirit appears, and the bitter leaven of the *Pharisee* is discovered, striking at the life of religion. But, agreeable to the usual craft of antichrist, they must call a godly concern and labour by a contrary name, or they could not smite at it with any colour of reason. Such honest labourers have sometimes been represented as enthusiasts, too hot in their zeal, disturbers of the church's peace, &c. When there is a peace in the church with wrong things, it is much better

Matth. x.
34.

broke than kept. I take it that it was in this sense our Lord said: "I came not to send peace on earth, but a sword." It was a woeful peace to *Israel*, when they became so reconciled to the inhabitants of the land, as to suffer them to dwell therein, contrary to the express command of God! When the upright in heart cannot for *Sion's* sake hold their peace, their spirits being truly enlightened to search *Jerusalem*, it is very dangerous for any to obstruct, oppose, or even to discourage them in such a godly undertaking. The voice of their Almighty Helper is, "Touch not mine anointed;" for he will certainly vindicate his own cause in their hands, and will recompence any injury done to it, or them, as if done to himself; so that all had need to know well what they do, and what spirit bears rule within them.

Some I have observed very blind, fruitless, and unskilful, who are not quite upon the same bottom as those above-mentioned, but who differ from them in the cause of their unfruitful situation, which arises chiefly from a gross deception in themselves, and for want of abiding in that wherein they could try the spirit that presents things to their minds. These have been moved and kindled by a false fire, and a zeal not duly tempered with that knowledge which comes from God. This proves a sore wounding to the cause of truth, where it hath prevailed; very hard to judge down, because it is commonly very wise and right in its own eyes. In concluding this head, I am free to express an ardent prayer, which hath filled mine heart

heart at times for a considerable number of years, that the Lord may be graciously pleased greatly to increase the number of those amongst us, who are made willing to leave all, and to follow the gentle leadings of his Spirit, whithersoever he is pleased to lead them; who prefer the welfare, peace, and prosperity of the city of God to their chiefest joy; that truth and righteousness may be so exalted in every part of the body, as to make all the sinners in *Sion* afraid indeed: for they cannot stand in judgment when the Lord arises in majesty among his saints, nor in the congregations of the righteous; that so for very shame there might be a casting their idols of silver, and their idols of gold, to the moles and to the bats. Isa. ii. 20.

The substance of what is before signified, is doubtless, and hath been, the fervent travail of many brethren and sisters, who are deeply affected with the present lethargy which prevails, yet are in the midst thereof comforted in observing great reviving of a concern, in most places, for stirring up and provoking one another to love and to good works; particularly in promoting discipline: which if it prospers (as I believe it will) truth and righteousness will prevail thereby, and *Sion* will enlarge her borders, her cords will be lengthened, and her stakes strengthened, and she will yet break forth on the right hand and on the left; her seed will inherit places which are now desolate. Therefore let the true travellers for her prosperity be encouraged; for I believe some of them will come to see the fruits of their painful travail, and be satisfied.

tified. May all such keep their habitations in a feeling sense of the Holy Head, whether in suffering or rejoicing, prosperity or adversity! For, as saith the apostle, "If we suffer with Christ, we shall reign with him, or be glorified together."

pleased to lead them, who bring them to the place, and prosperity of the city of God to their chief joy; that such and righteous may be favoured in every part of the body, as to make all the sinners in the world inglorious: for they cannot stand in judgment when the Lord rules in majesty among the saints, nor in the congregations of the righteous. **S I N I**

might be a casting their idols of silver, and their idols of gold, to the moles and to the bats.

The influence of what is before signified, is Godhead, and hath been the fervent travail of many brethren and sisters, who are deeply affected with the presence of sin.

5 NO 58

the mind is not content in observing great re- living of a concern, in most places, for stirring up

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